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INTRODUCTORY HINTS

TO

ENGLISH READERS

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY THE

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P R E F A C E .

THIS volume does not pretend to contribute anything new or original to the literature of the subject with which it deals. Its object is only to give in a short form and in simple language such elementary information about the character and contents of the Books of the Old Testament as may be gathered by those who have time and opportunity, from a study of the books themselves, or from larger and more technical treatises on the subject, but which it may be convenient to some readers of the Bible to have thrown together in this shape.

As the most effective way of conveying a good general idea of the contents of the Historical Books, and of the relation which their parts bear to the whole, short outlines of the contents of the more difficult books are given, and are carefully broken up into sections under distinct headings. A similar plan has been adopted with the Prophetical Books.

In matters of Biblical Criticism the writer has endeavoured to be guided by the best scholarship of the

present day. He ventures to hope that this endeavour, as far as it has been successful, may prove a recommendation of these Hints to some whose duty it is to teach the Bible to the young, and who are anxious that the religious instruction which they impart may rest upon as secure a foundation as possible. There can be no doubt but that some, at least, of the unbelief which now prevails is due to the fact that many persons have been taught as children opinions about the Bible which the stronger reason and increasing education of maturer years have made it impossible for them to retain, and that in rejecting the error they have thrown away the truth with it. It is not necessary, nor would it be right, to turn the Scriptural education of the young into a series of lessons on Biblical Criticism ; and the mistake of adopting too negative a style of teaching is one that may easily be made. To teach negations is not to teach religion. But the judicious instructor will be anxious to avoid as much as possible allowing the minds of the young to receive any wrong impressions about the Bible, which may prove dangerous to their faith when they grow older. Children should not be allowed to believe, as too many have been taught, that doubtful matters of history are part of a perfect Divine Revelation, or that the morality and wisdom of a comparatively rude age are the highest attainable by mankind, because the record of them is to be found "in the Bible." And the young, as well as the old, should learn to practise suspense of judgment at

times when the evidence adduced does not warrant a decision on the one side or the other. There are many subjects connected with the Bible on which we may well be diffident in expressing an opinion, when the wisest men and the best scholars are not agreed about them. Such an attitude of mind on points which are comparatively of little importance need not interfere with sincerity in believing, or with decision in teaching, more essential truths.¹

The writer is indebted to the kindness of friends for the correction of many errors of different kinds.

¹ This subject is thoughtfully discussed by the Rev. Canon Sherlock, in a pamphlet on *The Bible and the Young*. (Dublin : Hodges, Foster, and Co.)

CONTENTS.



INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

| | PAGE |
|------------------------------|------|
| THE OLD TESTAMENT, | 1 |

PART I.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER I.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| The Book of Genesis, | 4 |
|--------------------------------|---|

CHAPTER II.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Books of the Pentateuch after Genesis, | 19 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER III.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Ten Commandments, and the Civil and Religious Ordinances in the Pentateuch, | 29 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER IV.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, | 44 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER V.

| | PAGE |
|----------------------------------|------|
| The Undivided Kingdom, | 50 |

CHAPTER VI.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Division of the Kingdom, | 63 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER VII.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, | 68 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER VIII.

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreign Relations of the Kingdom of Judah, | 71 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER IX.

| | |
|---|----|
| Internal History of the Kingdom of Judah, | 81 |
|---|----|

CHAPTER X.

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| The Books of Chronicles, | 91 |
|------------------------------------|----|

CHAPTER XI.

| | |
|--|----|
| The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, | 93 |
|--|----|

CHAPTER XII.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Composition of the Historical Books, | 108 |
|--|-----|

CHAPTER XIII.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Character of the Earlier History, | 123 |
|---|-----|

CHAPTER XIV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| On the Later Historical Books, | 146 |
|--|-----|

PART II.

THE POETICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER XV.

| | PAGE |
|----------------------------|------|
| The Book of Job, | 167 |

CHAPTER XVI.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| The Psalms, | 179 |
|-----------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XVII.

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, | 192 |
|--|-----|

PART III.

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| The Books of the Prophets, | 206 |
|--------------------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XIX.

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, | 217 |
|---|-----|

CHAPTER XX.

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, | 247 |
|---|-----|

CHAPTER XXI.

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, | 261 |
| b | |

CHAPTER XXII.

| | PAGE |
|-------------------------------|------|
| The Book of Daniel, | 269 |

CHAPTER XXIII.

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah), | 274 |
|--|-----|

CHAPTER XXIV.

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Minor Prophets— <i>continued</i> (Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), | 292 |
|--|-----|

SUPPLEMENTAL CHAPTER.

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Canon of the Old Testament, | 314 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| INDEX, | 321 |
|------------------|-----|

CORRECTIONS.

- Page 1, line 8. On the date of the Septuagint. See also page 320.
 ,, 11, „ 1, *for "Lahai Roi," read "Lahai-roi."*
 „ 74, „ 18, *for "entered," read "came to."*
 „ 110, „ 20, *for "Deuteronomy," read "Deuteronomy."*
 „ 221, „ 3 from end, *for "places," read "palaces."*

INTRODUCTORY HINTS

TO

ENGLISH READERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.



INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

The Old Testament.

A LONG time ago, in an earlier stage of the world's history, before the English nation existed, and when the other countries of Europe were as yet unoccupied by the races of which its most important nations are now composed, and when many of the arts and sciences with which we are now familiar were quite unknown, or only in their earliest infancy, the Hebrew people dwelt in the country that is now called Palestine, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The Hebrews also called themselves Israelites, or sons of Israel, and in later times they were called Jews, the name by which their descendants, who are now scattered through many lands, are most commonly known. The Hebrews were in many respects inferior to the great nations which lived around them; for the Almighty distributes His gifts amongst nations as He

does amongst individuals. He does not give all to one person or nation, but divides them amongst His creatures severally as He wills. The Egyptians were more famous for learning than the Hebrews. The Phœnicians were, at the time of which we speak, the great traders of the world, and the Hebrews never possessed so vast an empire as that which had its seat at Nineveh or at Babylon. The special gift which the Almighty had bestowed upon them was their religion ; and the collection of books in which the records of their religion and of the history of the Hebrew people are preserved is one of the most precious possessions of mankind. The learning of the Egyptians is little known now. The Phœnicians are almost a forgotten people. The strong walls of Babylon and the gorgeous palaces of Nineveh are sunk in shapeless heaps of ruin. Even the religions of these ancient nations have been lost, and a knowledge of them is only now being recovered by the diligent explorations of learned men. The later empires of Greece and Rome have passed away. But these ancient Hebrew books of which we spoke, translated now into hundreds of languages, are read by old and young in all the continents of the earth, with the same reverence and love as when they were first written. This collection of books forms the first part of our Bible, and is called the Old Testament. It is so called in contrast with the latter part, which is called the New Testament, because it contains the account of the later and fuller revelation which the Almighty has made to mankind in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Books of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine distinct books. We are accustomed to see the whole collection bound together as one volume, or even as part of a volume. But it contains within it many compositions of different kinds and of different dates. As they are arranged in the English Bible, the first seventeen of these are historical works relating to different periods of the history of the Hebrew people and their religion. The next five are miscellaneous poetical books, and the last seventeen are the writings of the Hebrew prophets. The following are the titles of the books, as they are given at the beginning of the English Bible :—

| | | |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|
| GENESIS, | The Pentateuch. | ECCLESIASTES, |
| EXODUS, | | THE SONG OF SOLOMON, |
| LEVITICUS, | | ISAIAH, |
| NUMBERS, | | JEREMIAH, |
| DEUTERONOMY, | | LAMENTATIONS, |
| JOSHUA, | | EZEKIEL, |
| JUDGES, | | DANIEL, |
| RUTH, | | HOSEA, |
| I. SAMUEL, | Also called the Four Books of Kings. | JOEL, |
| II. SAMUEL, | | AMOS, |
| I. KINGS, | | OBADIAH, |
| II. KINGS, | | JONAH, |
| I. CHRONICLES, | | MICAH, |
| II. CHRONICLES, | | NAHUM, |
| EZRA, | | HABAKKUK, |
| NEHEMIAH, | | ZEPHANIAH, |
| ESTHER, | | HAGGAI, |
| JOB, | | ZECHARIAH, |
| PSALMS, | | MALACHI. |
| PROVERBS, | | |

PART I.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS.

The Pentateuch, or the Five Books of Moses.

THE first five books of the Old Testament are commonly known as “the Pentateuch,” which is a Greek name signifying the “five volumes.” They were also called “the Books of Moses,” or “the Book of the Law of Moses,” or sometimes simply “the Law.” The Greek titles of these books are derived from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Jewish Sacred Scriptures, which was made from the original Hebrew about the third century B.C., for the use of the Jews living in Egypt.

The Book of Genesis.

Genesis, or “the Origin,” is the Greek title of the first of the five books of Moses. This book is intended to form a general introduction to the history of the Hebrews. It gives an account of the creation of the heavens and the earth, of the early history of mankind, and of the origin of the Hebrew people, whose descent is traced down from

the first man Adam, through the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. An outline of the contents of this venerable book is given in the following paragraphs.

The Creation.

(GEN. i.-ii. 3.)

The Book of Genesis opens with an account of the creation by the Almighty of the heavens and the earth and all things that are therein. In six days the great work was completed, man made in the image of God being the work of the last day. To man was given dominion over everything else that God had made, “over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”; and he was commanded “to be fruitful and multiply, and to replenish the earth and subdue it.” On the seventh day the Almighty rested from His work, and, in commemoration of His rest, appointed the observance of the Sabbath day. “God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all His work which God created and made.”

The Fall.

(GEN. ii. 4–iii. 24.)

Adam and Eve, the first created man and woman, are placed in a state of innocence in the beautiful garden of Eden. But this happy state of things does not continue long. Eve is tempted by the serpent, which “was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made,” to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; she induces her husband to follow her example, and their united act of

disobedience brings a curse upon all creation. Sentence of death is passed upon the human race. The unhappy pair are driven out of Paradise lest they “put forth their hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” Since that day labour and sorrow have been the lot of man. On his account the very ground is cursed. It brings forth “thorns and thistles,” and it is only by painful labour in the sweat of his brow that man can win from it his hardly earned subsistence, until the day when he shall return again to the dust from which he was taken. Unto the woman, who misled the man, the Almighty declared—“I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” The serpent, the author of all the mischief, was cursed “above every beast of the field.” “Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his (*i.e.* its) heel.” It is from this part of the Book of Genesis that the subject of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the great epic poem of the English language, is taken. He sings—

“ Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world and all our woe.”

The Descendants of Adam.

(GEN. iv. 1–v. 32.)

The consequences of the fall soon begin to develop themselves. The sin of the parents bears bitter fruit

among the children, and disobedience to God is followed by crime against man. Cain, the eldest son of Adam, slays his innocent brother Abel in a fit of jealousy, and is driven out by the Divine sentence to be “a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.” He wanders to the “land of Nod,” on the east of Eden, and there became the father of a race amongst whom occur the names of many who were celebrated for the invention of arts. Cain himself was the first to build a city, which he named after his son Enoch. His descendant Jabal was “the father of all such as dwell in tents, and have cattle”; Jubal was the first musician, “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ”; and Tubal-Cain was “an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.” But there is no mention of religion amongst the descendants of Cain. The seed of goodness must therefore be preserved in another line. After the crime of Cain had deprived Eve of her two sons in one day, God had given her a third son, Seth. From Seth the better race is descended. When his son *Enos* was born “then began men to call upon the name of the Lord”; and amongst his later descendants occur the names of *Enoch*, who “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him,” and of *Lamech* the father of Noah.

The Flood.

(GEN. vi.-viii.)

But in spite of the presence of the good seed, the power of wickedness increases. “There were giants in the earth in those days,” and “the earth was filled with violence.” It soon becomes evident that there is no hope for the future but in sweeping away the existing generation. “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the

earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth; and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” The purification of the world is accomplished by the great catastrophe of the Flood. For days and months the earth is buried deep beneath the waters, while the family of Noah, the one man whose household had been found righteous before the Lord, floats securely on the surface in the ark which he had prepared by the command of God, and into which had been gathered pairs of every kind of living creature, “to keep their seed alive upon the face of all the earth.”

The Re-peopling of the Earth, and the Genealogy of the Nations.

(GEN. ix.-xi.)

As the waters of the Flood begin to abate, the ark rests upon the top of Mount Ararat, in Armenia, and when the earth is dry, God opens the door, and all its occupants come forth. Noah’s first act is to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to the Lord who had so mercifully preserved him. The rainbow is set in the sky, in token that the earth shall never again be destroyed by a flood, and a new and more hopeful era begins. But it is not long until its purity is sullied by sin, and Noah pronounces a curse upon Canaan, the descendant of his son Ham. Then follows the genealogy of the nations, which is traced with great minuteness from Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three

sons of Noah. The diversity of languages is accounted for by the story of the tower of Babel. The descendants of Shem are traced with especial care. From him in the tenth generation is derived Abram or Abraham, "the father of the faithful," the founder of the Hebrew race; and on him and his descendants the history henceforth concentrates itself.

Abram, or Abraham.

(GEN. xi. 27-xii. 5.)

Abram, or Abraham, is the most prominent and important figure in the Book of Genesis, and many chapters are devoted to his history. His first home was in "Ur of the Chaldees," a place which some have identified with Mughair on the Euphrates. But this opinion is not universally accepted. From Ur Abram's father Terah migrates to Haran or, as it is sometimes written, Charran in Mesopotamia. But Haran is not to be the resting-place of the chosen race, and after Terah's death God calls Abram to leave it, promising to bring him to another land, where He will bless him and make him a great nation. Setting out from Haran, in company with his nephew Lot and their respective companies of followers, Abram moves southward and westward until he reaches the land of Canaan, the future home of the Hebrews. The time for them to obtain possession of it has, however, not yet arrived, and Abram lives as a pilgrim and a stranger in the land which God has given to his children.

(GEN. xii. 6-xiii. 18.)

After Abram's arrival in the land of Canaan, the narrative of his life becomes more minute. The details of it

should be read in the Book of Genesis, and are well known to readers of the Bible. Here we can only mention the chief events in the order in which they occur. At first he has no settled resting-place, and encamps near Sichem, which will be found on the map about the centre of the part of the country which was afterwards called Samaria. From Sichem he moves to the neighbourhood of Bethel. "Going on still towards the south," Abram is compelled by a famine to remove for a time into Egypt. During the visit to Egypt is related the story of his first denial of his wife. Returning from Egypt he settles again at Bethel. Here a dispute arises between his herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot, and leads to their separation. To avoid all chance of a quarrel between "brethren" Abram generously allows Lot to select for himself whatever part of the country he prefers, agreeing himself to move away in the opposite direction. Lot selects the plain of Jordan, because it was rich and well watered. "But," as the narrative significantly adds, the inhabitants were "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Abram settles at Hebron, after receiving a renewal of the promise that his seed should inherit the land.

(GEN. xiv.)

The next event related of Abram shows him in a new character as the prompt and successful leader of his clan in a military enterprise. The cities of the plain where Lot was settled revolted from a foreign power, to which they had been subject, and the confederate armies of four kings invaded the country. The invaders defeated the armies of the people of the plain, sacked their cities, and carried off Lot amongst other captives. As soon as

Abram heard of the disaster, he armed his followers, and assisted by three Canaanite chiefs, with whom he was confederate, pursued the retreating invaders, overtook them in the neighbourhood of Damascus, routed them in a night attack, and brought back Lot and the other prisoners in safety. For this exploit he received the congratulations of the kings of the land, and was blessed by Melchizedee, king of Salem, and “priest of the most high God,” who met him on his return.

(GEN. XV. 1.—XXI. 34.)

After this the Divine promise, that Abram’s seed should inherit the land, is again renewed, and is confirmed by a vision; though as yet there is no apparent prospect of its fulfilment, for Abram is still childless. The birth of Ishmael, his son by Hagar an Egyptian handmaid of his wife Sarai, seems to bring the promise nearer to its fulfilment; but Ishmael is not to be the chosen seed. As if to assure him that the promise is not forgotten, though the fulfilment of it is so long delayed, the covenant is once again renewed, and confirmed by the change of his own name from Abram to Abraham, by the institution of the rite of circumcision, and by the change of Sarai’s name to Sarah. Then the actual birth of the promised heir is announced to be close at hand. But even yet several incidents are interposed before it actually takes place. The cities of the plain, where Lot dwelt, are destroyed by fire from heaven, in consequence of the wickedness of their inhabitants, after Abraham had vainly interceded that they should be spared. Lot, escaping from the burning city, becomes the father of the Moabites and Ammonites, two nations whose names we shall often meet again. Abraham’s denial of his wife is again repeated—this time at Gerar, in

the country of the Philistines, whither he had removed from Hebron. At last Isaac is born and circumcised when his father is one hundred years old. Hagar and her son Ishmael are driven away. They settle in the wilderness of Paran, and Abraham is comforted for the expulsion of his first-born by the promise that he too shall become a nation. Abraham's power and position in the land of Canaan at this time is shown by his covenant with the Philistine prince Abimelech and his captain Phicol.

(GEN. xxii. 1-19.)

The trial of Abraham's faith is completed by the command to sacrifice his son Isaac, upon whom all the hopes of the future depended. His faith proves equal to the great demand made upon it. In obedience to the Divine command he has lifted up the knife to slay his son, but the execution of the cruel deed is not required of him. The angel of the Lord calls to him out of heaven and forbids him to lay his hand upon the lad. Another—a more acceptable—sacrifice is provided, and a second voice from heaven announces the blessing of Abraham's posterity for this remarkable act of faithful obedience.

(GEN. xxiii. 1-xxv. 10.)

After this Sarah dies at Hebron, and is buried in the Cave of Machpelah, which Abraham buys for a possession—the first possession in the promised land—from Ephron the Hittite. After Sarah's death, Abraham sends the eldest servant of his house to Haran, where his brother Nahor had settled, to find a wife for Isaac from his own family, that he might not intermarry with the Canaanites. A most interesting account is given of the old servant's mission; and Isaac marries his cousin Rebekah. After

Sarah's death Abraham again marries Keturah, by whom he has six sons; and then, after distributing his property between his sons, giving Isaac the chief portion, and having sent away the sons of Keturah into the East Country, he dies, at the age of one hundred and seventy-five, and is buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael in the Cave of Machpelah, by the side of Sarah his wife.

The Covenant.

An idea which holds a prominent place in the history of Abraham is that of a Covenant, or definite statement of a relation existing between God and man. Such a relation cannot be of man's making—it is due to the gracious condescension of the Divine Being—it originates in His eternal purpose before the world began, and becomes manifest in time. Man has only the power of accepting or refusing it—of keeping or breaking it. If the spiritual Covenant, the invisible relation between God and man, is to be known and remembered by the generality of mankind, there must be something tangible—something that they can see, or hear, or touch—to remind them of its existence and of their acceptance of it. The tangible mark of the Covenant in the Jewish religion was circumcision. Circumcision was therefore to the Jew, as baptism is to the Christian, "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

Isaac.

(GEN. XXVI. 1-33 : XXXV. 27-29.)

Isaac, the second patriarch, is not by any means so interesting or important a personage as his father, and his history occupies a remarkably small part of the book. Like Abraham, he lives a wandering life. At first we

find him dwelling by the well Lahai Roi in the South Country.¹ We then read of his removing to Gerar, the city of the Philistine king Abimelech, to escape from a famine. During his sojourn at Gerar a story is told of his denying his wife, which bears a remarkable resemblance to those which are related of his father on the two occasions of his visits to Egypt and to this same Gerar. The jealousy of the Philistines drives Isaac away from Gerar, and he moves from one place to another until he settles at Beersheba, the Well of the Oath, at the southern limit of the land of Canaan. Here again we meet with another incident bearing a striking resemblance to a similar passage in Abraham's history. He is visited by a Philistine king Abimelech, who, also in conjunction with a chief captain Phicol, makes a league with Isaac.² Beersheba is not the end of Isaac's wanderings. A long time after we find him at Mamre, near the city of Hebron, where his father dwelt. Here he dies at the age of one hundred and eighty years, and is buried by his sons Esau and Jacob.

Jacob and Esau.

(GEN. xxv. 19-34 : xxvii. 1-40.)

Like Sarah, Isaac's wife Rebekah was for a long time without children. But, in answer to the prayer of her husband, twin sons were born twenty years after their marriage. Esau was the elder, and entitled to certain privileges in consequence. Coming home hungry from his hunting, he contemptuously sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage. To us the calculating Jacob, who was so ready to take a selfish advantage

¹ Gen. xxiv. 62.

² See p. 12.

of his brother's folly, seems little, if at all, more worthy of respect than Esau. And his character appears in a worse light still when he allows himself to be led by his mother to personate the absent Esau, and fraudulently to obtain from his aged father, who is too blind to distinguish between his sons, the blessing which he intended for Esau. Still the story of Jacob and Esau is in accordance with a common experience, when it gives the ultimate success in life to the brother who lives with a purpose, rather than to him who is the mere creature of impulse, even though the character which makes its way to success be not in itself the most attractive at first. And it sometimes happens, too, that a character like that of Jacob, which at first is merely prudent, becomes purified in time by the educating influence of life, and by the grace of God develops in a higher direction.

(GEN. xxvii. 41—xxviii. 9 : xxxvi.)

Esau threatens vengeance against his brother for the wrong that he has suffered; and to save her favourite son Rebekah resolves to send Jacob away to Haran to her brother Laban. She induces his father to send him thither, that he may take a wife from his own people. Esau had already two wives of the daughters of the land; and now when he saw that the daughters of Canaan "pleased not" his father, he took, in addition to the wives which he had, a daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael. He afterwards moved to Mount Seir, a hill district to the south of Canaan. The Edomites, who dwell in Mount Seir, are the descendants of Esau.

Jacob, or “Israel.”

(GEN. xxviii. 10-22.)

Jacob set out upon his solitary journey. But the heir of Abraham was not left without an intimation of the Divine favour and presence. As night fell he “lighted upon a certain place,” where he laid him down to sleep with a stone “of that place” for his pillow. In the visions of the night he saw a ladder reaching up to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And behold! the Lord stood above. The Almighty renewed to Isaac the promises which he had made to Abraham; he assured him of the Divine guidance and protection in his present journey, and promised him a safe return to the land of promise. Awaking from sleep, Jacob recognises the sacred character of the place; he marks the spot, which he calls *Bethel*, or the *House of God*, by setting up the stone upon which he had slept, as a pillar; and after making an offering and vowed to serve “the God of Bethel,” if he returns to his father’s house in peace, he sets forward upon his journey.

(GEN. xxix. -xxxii.)

Arrived at Haran, he meets his future wife Rachel at a well, much as his father’s servant had met Rebekah. But the course of his wooing does not run so smoothly as that of his father’s had done. The avaricious Laban takes advantage of his passion to obtain from him seven years’ service for his daughter. At the end of the seven years he gives him another daughter Leah instead of Rachel, for whom Jacob has to consent to serve seven years more. It is a contest of wits between Jacob and his

father-in-law, and in the end the cunning Jacob wins. After twenty years' exile he returns to Canaan a rich man, and the father of eleven sons, whose mothers are the two sisters and their two handmaids. Benjamin, the youngest, is born after his return to Canaan; and the twelve are the forefathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

(GEN. xxxii. 1-xxxiii. 16.)

On his return to Canaan Jacob meets with fresh tokens of the Divine favour. At Mahanaim "the angels of God met him," and in memory of the occurrence the place receives its name, which signifies "the two camps." At this period in his history also occurs the story of his mysterious wrestling until daybreak by the lonely stream of Jabbok with "a man," from whom he receives a blessing, his name being then changed from Jacob to Israel, the prince of God, in commemoration of the event.

There is an interesting account of his meeting with his brother Esau, when the old characters of the brothers come out again after their long separation: Jacob is prudent, cautious, suspicious; Esau is frank and off-handed; he has quite forgotten the injury of former years.

(GEN. xxxiii. 17-xxxv.)

After his return he lives, like his fathers, the life of a wanderer in Canaan. He dwells for a time at Succoth, the place of booths; at Shalem, where he bought a piece of ground from the Shechemites and built an altar to the God of Israel; at Bethel, the scene of his vision, where he now fulfills his vow by causing his household to put away the strange gods that were among them,

perhaps the relics of his sojourn in the East; and at Mamre, where Isaac dies, and is buried by his two sons Jacob and Esau.

(GEN. XXXVII : XXXIX-L.)

The most important event in the later part of Israel's life is the migration of the whole family into Egypt, which is told in the beautiful and well-known story of Joseph and his brethren. Jacob dies in Egypt, and, in accordance with his dying request, his body is brought back to Canaan, the land that God has promised to his children, and buried by Joseph in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, and where Leah his own wife had been laid before him. Joseph also dies in Egypt, having seen his children of the third generation sitting upon his knees, and having enjoined his brethren with his latest breath to embalm his body, and to bring it with them into Canaan, for God has promised to bring them thither again, and His promise cannot fail.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOOKS OF THE PENTATEUCH AFTER GENESIS.

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

THE next three books of the Pentateuch are (1) Exodus, or “the going out,” which relates the departure of the Israelites from Egypt; (2) Leviticus, which is almost entirely composed of directions about the offering of sacrifices and other ceremonial observances, and derives its title from the tribe of Levi, which was set apart for the performance of public duties connected with religion; and (3) Numbers, which contains, with other things, two accounts of the numbering of the host, once in the wilderness of Sinai during the second year after the departure from Egypt, and again in the last year on the eve of their entrance into the Land of Canaan.

The contents of these three books are, in more detail, as follows :—

Israel in Egypt.

(Ex. i.)

A long time elapses after the events related in the end of the book of Genesis before the history of the Israelites is again taken up and continued in the beginning of the book of Exodus. According to one passage in the book of Exodus, the length of this period is 430 years; but according to the Septuagint reading of the same passage, and the chronology more commonly accepted among the Jews, the interval between the migration into Egypt and the Exodus

would be nearer to 200 years.¹ During this time the family of Jacob has grown into a powerful nation : the “threescore and ten persons” who went down into Egypt have become “as the stars of heaven for multitude.” Other changes too have taken place: Joseph and all his generation are dead, and another king has arisen “which knew not Joseph.” The memory of Joseph’s services to Egypt in the days of the famine is forgotten ; and when the rapid growth of the Hebrew population begins to alarm the Egyptians, cruel measures are adopted to keep them down. The Hebrews are compelled to work like slaves, under rigorous taskmasters, at brickmaking, and city building, and “all manner of service in the field.” “They built for Pharaoh the treasure cities”—or store cities—“Pithom and Raamses.” When this oppression fails in its object of weakening the Hebrews, for “the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew,” a command is given to destroy all the male Hebrew children at their birth.

Moses.

(Ex. ii.)

At this juncture Moses, the future deliverer, is born. The romantic story of the manner in which he escaped being put to death as an infant, and came to be brought up by Pharaoh’s daughter at the Egyptian court, is well known. When he is forty years of age he slays an

¹ Ex. xii. 40, 41 (see also Gen. xv. 13). The LXX. inserts some words so as to include in the 430 years the sojourn of the Patriarchs in Canaan before the migration into Egypt. This insertion is probably made to bring the passage into harmony with Ex. vi. 16–20; or possibly “in deference to chronological records to which the writers had access in Egypt.”—(Lightfoot on Gal. iii. 17.) The shorter chronology is adopted in Gal. iii. 17. Acts vii. 6, refers to Gen. xv. 13.

Egyptian who has been illtreating one of the Hebrew labourers. But his first attempt to act the part of deliverer is not favourably received by his own people, and fearing the consequences of his act, Moses flies to the land of Midian. There he passes another forty years of his life, tending the flocks of Jethro "the priest of Midian," whose daughter Zipporah he marries.

The Exodus.

(Ex. iii.-xiii.)

When the time comes for Moses to effect the deliverance of his brethren, the Lord appears to him in a flame of fire in a bush, as he tends the flocks of Jethro in the wilderness, and reveals Himself as the Great I AM, the self-existent Being. Jehovah commissions Moses to return to Egypt, and to lead His people back to the land of Canaan. At first Moses shrinks before the difficulty of the task, but he is reproved for his want of faith in hesitating to undertake the work which the Almighty commissions him to do, and reluctantly consents to go. His brother Aaron is allowed to accompany him as spokesman, for Moses had complained that he was "slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Moses is further armed with the power of working miraculous signs, to convince his countrymen of the truth of his commission to effect their deliverance; and the two brothers go down to Egypt. There is a long struggle before Pharaoh consents to let the Israelites go: but he is compelled to yield by the infliction of the ten plagues, which come in dread succession at the word of Moses, and he gives them permission to depart. They set out in haste by night at the urgent request of the people of Egypt, who are afraid that their longer continu-

anee in the country may bring some fresh calamity upon them, and the mighty host moves forward, “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them, and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.” Their march is led by a “pillar of a cloud” by day, and “a pillar of fire” by night, in which “the Lord went before them.” In memory of their great deliverance and their hasty departure the Feast of the Passover is instituted : a feast to be kept “by an ordinance for ever among their generations.”

The Israelites cross the Red Sea, and march to Mount Sinai.

(Ex. xiv.-xviii.)

But though the Israelites have escaped out of Egypt their troubles are not yet over—their great trial is, in fact, only beginning. They have no sooner reached the Red Sea and encamped upon its shore, than they learn that the army of Pharaoh is pursuing them. With “the sea before” and “the foe behind” their position seems hopeless, and the people give way to despair. But Moses encourages them, and assures them that if they will but trust in God they shall see His salvation that day ; the Egyptians, whom they see pursuing now, they are looking upon for the last time—they “shall see them again no more for ever.” He then lifts up his rod over the sea, and the waters divide. The Israelites pass over on dry land in the midst of the sea, while the waters are “a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.” When the Egyptians attempt to follow, the returning waves close around them, and they are “drowned in the depths of the sea.” This wonderful deliverance is followed by others no

less remarkable. When the people cannot drink the bitter waters of Marah, the Lord shows Moses a tree which he casts into them, and straightway they become sweet. When the hungry people murmur for food, multitudes of quails come up and cover the camp, and manna falls from heaven, sufficient for their daily supply, and never fails them during all the years of their wanderings in the wilderness. Again, when they are in want of water, Moses strikes a rock in the barren wilderness, and a plentiful supply gushes forth at once. When they fight with Amalek, if Moses holds up his hands in supplication Israel prevails; if he lets them droop Amalek prevails: and the success of the arms of Israel is secured by Aaron and Hur, who place Moses sitting upon a stone, and support his hands in an attitude of supplication until the evening. After this is related the arrival in the camp of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, who brings his daughter to join her husband. Jethro sacrifices to the God of Israel, and strikes a league with the elders of Israel. By the advice of the Midianite chief, Moses organizes a system of government for the vast host under his command. He selects "able men, such as fear God—men of truth, hating covetousness," and makes them "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds; rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens," who are to judge the people "at all seasons" "in small matters," reserving all "great matters" for his own decision.

At Sinai.

(Ex. xix.-xl., LEVITICUS, NUMB. i.-x. 10.)

In the third month from the departure out of Egypt, the host reaches the wilderness of Sinai. Here Moses receives from the Almighty the Divine laws for the future

guidance of the people. The account of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai; of the idolatry of the people, who compel Aaron to make the golden calf during the absence of Moses on the Mount, which causes Moses to break the two tables of the Law, and renders it necessary that the tables be inscribed a second time ; the account of the making of the tabernacle, the movable tent temple of the nomad congregation, with the details of the Mosaic legislation and of the Jewish ritual, run on through the rest of Exodus and the whole of Leviticus, the details of law and ritual regulation being often interwoven with the historical narrative in a way that makes it at times difficult to follow the thread of the story. Then follows, in the beginning of the Book of Numbers, the census at Mount Sinai, more ceremonial details, the dedication of the Tabernacle, and the celebration of the Passover.

The Israelites leave Sinai.

(NUMB. x. 11-xii.)

On the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year after their departure from Egypt, the camp at Sinai is broken up, and the host moves forward again. Their second advance is attended by circumstances some of which strike us by their resemblance to those which were related in the account of their former march from Egypt. Moses' father-in-law again appears, this time under the name of " Hobab, the son of Raguel "; a " fire of the Lord " " burns among " the people, and consumes some of them, when they displease Him by their complainings ; there is another account of " elders " being appointed to assist Moses in the government of the host ; when the people again lust for flesh, another enormous supply of quails is sent. Aaron and his sister Miriam

murmuring against their brother Moses, Miriam is smitten with leprosy; but is restored at the intercession of Moses.

The Spies.

(NUMB. xiii., xiv.)

Twelve spies, one from each tribe, are sent to explore the land of Canaan. They bring back such discouraging accounts of the might of the inhabitants and the strength of their strongholds that the Israelites lose heart entirely, and for their lack of faith are condemned by the Divine sentence to wander in the wilderness for forty years. None of that generation shall ever set foot in the land of their inheritance. When they are dead their children shall take possession of it. Only two men in all the host are excepted from the terms of the sentence—Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, who did their best to encourage their brethren, and counteract the effect of the alarming reports which the other spies brought back. Their ten faint-hearted companions die by a plague.

On hearing the sentence of exclusion from the promised land the people, with a temporary accession of courage, rashly resolve to attempt the invasion at once. Moses refuses to join them, and the ark of the covenant does not move from its place. But the people advance amongst the hills, and the inhabitants of the district, “Amalekites” and “Canaanites,” come down upon them and smite them, and drive them discomfited from their territory.

Forty Years' Wandering.

(NUMB. xv.—xxxvi.)

Of the time coming after the return of the spies until the Israelites reach the eastern borders of the land of

Canaan, which is the great part of the “forty years,” we are not told many particulars. The occurrences which are given a place in this part of the narrative are as follows :—

(NUMB. xvi., xvii.)

The rebellion of Korah and others against the authority of Moses and Aaron. The rebels are destroyed by an earthquake and a plague, and the right of Aaron to the priestly office is vindicated by the mysterious budding of his rod.

(NUMB. xx. i.)

Miriam, the sister of Moses, dies in the wilderness of Zin.

(NUMB. xx. 2-13.)

Water again supplied by Moses striking a rock. He and Aaron are prohibited from entering the promised land.

(NUMB. xx. 14-21.)

The Edomites refuse to let Israel pass through their country.

(NUMB. xx. 23-29.)

Aaron dies, and Eleazar his son succeeds to the priest's office.

(NUMB. xxii. 1-3.)

Successful raid on “King Arad the Canaanite,” who “dwelt in the south,” to avenge his attack on the Israelites. The Canaanites and their cities are “utterly destroyed.”

(NUMB. xxii. 4-9.)

Having failed to enter Canaan from the south, and having been refused a passage across the mountains of the Edomites, the host marches southward “to compass the land of Edom.” The people are discouraged by the journey, and murmur for bread. Fiery flying serpents are sent to punish them. Moses makes a brazen serpent,

and lifts it up upon a pole, and “when a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.”

(NUMB. XXI. 10-35.)

Having compassed the territory of the Edomites, and marched northwards again along their eastern border, the Israelites fight against Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan. They conquer both kings and occupy their land.

(NUMB. XXII.-XXV; XXXI.)

War with Balak, king of Moab, and the Midianites, rendered specially interesting by the episode of Balaam the soothsayer. Balak the Moabite king hires Balaam from Mesopotamia to curse the enemy before he ventures to engage them. The reality of Balaam's prophetic powers is recognised by the whole course of the narrative. He is supposed to have belonged to one of the Eastern tribes akin to the Hebrews. But he is unable to curse the people of God. He cannot reverse the course of providence, he can only declare it. Instead of cursing the people of Israel he, therefore, pronounces them blessed, and predicts their future greatness. The end of Balaam is melancholy. He tries to earn his pay from Balak by bringing a curse upon the Israelites in another way. It is by his advice that the Moabites tempt Israel to commit idolatry; but the spread of idolatry among God's people is stopped by the bold deed of Phineas, the son of Eleazar the high priest. A terrible vengeance is taken upon the Midianites: all the males are slain; and in the general slaughter the unworthy Balaam perishes.

(NUMB. xxvi.)

Another census is taken in the plains of Moab. The numbers correspond pretty nearly with those given by the former census, being in both cases about 600,000 fighting men, which would represent a total population of between two and three millions.

The Book of Deuteronomy.

The Book of Deuteronomy, or *the second law-giving*, contains another and more compact edition of the law, together with a summary of the history from the exodus to the end of the desert wanderings. These are given in two great speeches, which are put in the mouth of Moses, just before his death, in the last year of the wandering.¹ The style of these addresses is more oratorical than that of the earlier books, and the composition of them is more uniform and connected. The two great addresses are followed by—(1) various exhortations and directions for the guidance of the Israelites when they shall have reached the land of their inheritance²; (2) the song of Moses³; and (3) the blessing of Moses, “wherewith he blessed the children of Israel before his death.”⁴ The death of Moses follows, at the age of 120; the third period of 40 years in his life being then concluded. He is buried by the Lord in Mount Nebo, but “no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day.” When Moses is dead, Joshua the son of Nun, the faithful spy, who had been his constant companion during life, takes his place as leader of Israel.⁵

¹ Deut. i.—iv. 40, and iv. 44—xxvi. 19.

⁴ Deut. xxxiii.

² Deut. xxvii.—xxx. 13.

⁵ Deut. xxxiv.

³ Deut. xxxi. 14—xxxii. 52.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND THE CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES IN THE PENTATEUCH.

The Ten Commandments.

AT the head of the Mosaic Legislation, in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, stand the Ten Commandments, which, ever since their first promulgation, have been accepted by the Jewish and Christian Churches as containing the fundamental principles of religious and moral obligation. Thousands of years have passed, and to-day they are adopted by the wisest and best of mankind, as the highest rules of life; and in their simple words the first elements of religious duty are taught to children.

The Ten Commandments, engraven on two tables of stone, were inclosed in the ark or sacred chest, which was carried in the centre of the host of Israel during all their wanderings. When the army halted the tabernacle was set up, and the ark was placed within it.

The Laws of Moses.

After the ten commandments come the other enactments, which contain the civil and ceremonial law of the Jews. The laws are contained in a number of distinct sections or chapters, the beginning of each being marked by the words "*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,*" or some similar formula. Sometimes the origin of a law is connected with a historical occurrence, which is related in

the section. The same or similar laws are often repeated; occasionally one law appears to contradict another, and the arrangement of the whole is complicated and confusing. In these particulars this portion of the Pentateuch reminds us of the Koran, the different chapters of which are said to have been composed by Mahomet from time to time, as the inspiration seized him, and then thrown aside, and to have been collected by his followers after his death. There is, however, this difference between the two, that the *suras* or chapters of the Koran are arranged entirely without any regard to their subject matter, the only principle that can be discerned in the arrangement of them being that the longer are placed first and the shorter last. In the Pentateuch the law is undoubtedly arranged according to a fixed plan, but it is not always easy to say what the plan is.

The Civil Law; Service for Debt.

(Ex. xxi. 2-11; xxii. 3; Lev. xxv. 39-55; Deut. xv. 12-18.)

It is remarkable that the first provision of the civil law was for the protection of native-born Hebrews who were in servitude to their brethren. Such servitude might commence by the voluntary act of a poor man selling himself to his richer neighbour; or he might be sold as an insolvent debtor, or as a thief unable to make restitution. But in any case the service was not compulsory beyond six years. In the seventh year the bond-servant was free, if he wished to go; but he might, if he preferred, remain with his master "for ever." One reason why he might prefer to remain was, that if his master had given him a wife during his bondage, she and her children continued to belong to the master.

According to the law in Leviticus, it was in the year of Jubilee—the fiftieth year—that all service for debt terminated. In order to reconcile the two laws, it has been supposed that even the voluntary service came to an end in the Jubilee.¹

The Jewish law of service for debt had an evident advantage over the English law of imprisonment for debt, which was only abolished in the present century : for the labour of the Jewish debtor was turned to use, and went to compensate the creditor, while the English debtor languished in a useless and demoralizing confinement.

The Jewish law was only for the protection of their own people, “their brethren.” It was allowable to keep strangers or foreigners in perpetual slavery.

Land Law ; House Property ; Inheritance.

(LEV. xxv. : NUMB. xxvii. 1–11, xxxvi. : DEUT. xxi. 15–17.)

The Jews held their land as the immediate tenants of the Almighty, and the tenure of each farm was secured to its occupant by a law similar to that which protected his personal liberty. If at any time he was compelled by poverty to part with any portion of his inheritance, he retained the right to redeem it, whenever he could, by repaying the purchase-money, less the value of the use which the buyer had enjoyed. If the land was not so redeemed before the year of Jubilee, it then reverted without any payment to its original owner or his representatives. This law applied to holdings in the country and in villages, and to the possessions of the Levites. It did not apply to houses in non-Levitical cities. In the case of such property there was a right of redemption, but it

¹ See The Speaker’s Commentary on Exodus xxi. 5, 6.

only lasted for one year from the date of purchase; and the property did not return at the Jubilee.

The eldest son was entitled to a double portion. Women could inherit, but only in default of male heirs.

Murder and other Offences Punishable by Death.

(Ex. xxi. 12-21, 29; xxxi. 12-17; Lev. xx. 9-16; xxiv. 13-16; Numb. xv. 32-36; xxxv. 9-34; Deut. iv. 11-43; xiii.; xvii. 2-7; xix. 1-13, 15; xxi. 18-21; xxii. 13-27; xxiv. 7.)

The murderer was to be put to death, and the sentence was to be executed by “the revenger of blood.” But if the slayer fled to one of the “cities of refuge”—six cities so situated in the country that one or other of them could be easily reached from any part of it—then the revenger could not touch him until it was settled by a competent tribunal whether the killing was accidental or not. If it was decided to be accidental the slayer was safe from the avenger, provided that he remained in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest then in office. If he was proved guilty of murder the sanctuary did not protect him.

The following crimes, as well as murder, were to be punished with death:—

- (1) Homicide by wilful carelessness, as when anyone was killed by an ox after the owner had been warned that the animal was dangerous.
- (2) Smiting or cursing a father or mother, or incorrigible disobedience to parents.
- (3) Adultery, incest, or unnatural sins.
- (4) Man-stealing.
- (5) Witchcraft.
- (6) Sacrificing “to any other God,” or blaspheming the God of Israel.
- (7) Sabbath-breaking.

Two witnesses, at least, were necessary to condemn anyone to death, and the hand of the witness was to be the first in inflicting the punishment.

Minor Offences against the Person; Lex Talionis.

(Ex. xxi. 22-27, 33-36 : Lev. xxiv. 17-22 : Deut. xxv. 1-3 ; xix. 16-21.)

The infliction of injuries to the person was punished by the law of retaliation. As in the case of murder the law was "life for life," so in lesser injuries it was "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." False witnesses were subject to the same law. They had to bear the punishment which their false evidence would have been the means of inflicting on the accused. In some instances of injuries done by a master to his own slave, compensation was made by setting the slave at liberty. Apparently also the penalty for injuries done to the person might be commuted for a money payment. Punishment with stripes is also mentioned.

Trespass; Offences against Property.

(Ex. xxii. 1-15.)

In cases of damage done to property, reparation was made by restitution. Even a thief was punished in the same way, but the restitution which he had to make was much heavier, sometimes amounting to as much as five times the property stolen. If he was not able to pay, he was sold for the debt. But a thief in the act of breaking into a house in the night time, not in the day, might be killed by the householder with impunity.

Women.

(Ex. xxi. 7-11, 22-25; xxii. 16-17; Numb. v. 11-31; xxvii.; xxxvi.: Deut. xxii. 13-30; xxiv. 1-5.)

Women were protected from injustice by many special enactments. But female frailty was punished with extreme severity. Divorce was allowed in certain cases. The right of women to inherit, in default of male heirs, has already been mentioned.

Spirit of Humanity in the Law.

(Ex. xxii. 21-27; xxiii. 1-13; Lev. xix. 13-19, 32-37; xxii. 26-28; xxv. 35-55; Deut. x. 12-22; xx. 19, 20; xxii. 1-12; xxiv. 6, 10-22.)

Intermingled with the laws which were enforced by definite penalties are to be found a number of precepts to which no fixed penalties are attached, and which were probably intended as appeals to conscience, and good feeling, and public opinion. Humanity to the poor and helpless, whom positive enactments alone can never protect from a certain kind of oppression, was especially inculcated in this way. Thus, the creditor was forbidden to take the upper or the nether millstone in security for his debt, for that would be taking “a man’s life to pledge.” And if the debtor was poor, the creditor was to give him back his pledge at night, that he might “sleep in his own raiment.” There is great delicacy of feeling in the direction to the creditor not to go into a poor man’s house “to fetch his pledge,” but to stand without until it was brought to him. The hired servant, again, was to receive his hire “at his day” “before the sun go down,” “for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it.” Humanity is frequently encouraged by a touching appeal to the past experience of God’s people:—“Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor

oppress him, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt"; or, as it is put elsewhere, "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." The Israelite was ever to remember that he was under the eye of One higher than the law. If he saw his enemy's beast fallen on the road, and "would forbear to help him," he was not in anywise to hide himself from him, but to help to raise the fallen. Consideration for the lower animals was also commanded: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn"; "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk"; "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together." It is true that there is an uncertainty about the last two precepts. The former of them may have reference to some unknown religious rite or superstitious custom; but even so, we cannot doubt that a condemnation of the want of delicate feeling shown in such a proceeding is included in its prohibition. The command against ploughing with an ox and an ass together no doubt belongs to a series of directions against causing "confusion," by mixing together things of "diverse" natures. But, on another side, it also has reference to the cruelty of enforcing an "unequally yoked" union. A command not to take the mother bird from the nest along with her eggs or young ones may have been a "Birds' Protection Act," dictated by motives of prudence and economy. But the rule was not due to economy alone, for we find elsewhere a similar direction against killing a cow or ewe on the same day with her young.

The Ceremonial Law ; The Great Festivals.

(Ex. xxiii. 14-19 : LEV. xvi; xxiii: NUMB. ix. 1-14:
DEUT. xvi. 1-17.)

In addition to the weekly and monthly holy-days on the sabbaths and the new moons, there were three great

annual festivals, at which every male Jew was expected, if possible, to attend in Jerusalem. These were—The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering.

The Passorer, or Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was held for seven days, from the fourteenth day of the first month “at even” to the twenty-first day. It must be remembered that the Jewish day commenced at sunset, consisting of “the evening and the morning,” not the morning and the evening or the day and night, as we should say. At the beginning of the Festival, on the fourteenth day at even, the paschal lamb was slain, and eaten the same night, those who partook of it doing so with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staves by their sides, in memory of their hasty departure from Egypt; and during the whole Festival no leaven was to be used, or even “found” in any of their houses. The English name “Passover,” applied either to the lamb that was eaten at this Festival, or to the Festival itself, is a happy rendering of the Hebrew word *pascha*, which has also been transferred to the Greek.

The Harvest Festival, or Pentecost.

On a certain day, connected with the Feast of the Passover, and spoken of as “the morrow after the Sabbath”—an expression about the meaning of which there is much uncertainty—before any of the harvest was used, one sheaf was presented to the Lord along with other offerings. On the fiftieth day from the performance of this ceremony the

Harvest Festival was kept. It lasted for only one day. It was also called the Feast of Weeks, because it occurred after the lapse of a week of weeks, forty-nine days, from “the morrow after the Sabbath” on which the sheaf was presented. The Greek name Pentecost means the fiftieth day. Another name for it was “the Feast of the First Fruits of the Wheat Harvest.” At this feast two loaves made of the first fruits of the harvest were presented, and appropriate sacrifices were offered.

*Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles ; Feast of Trumpets ;
Day of Atonement.*

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when the fruits of the land had been gathered in, the third great Festival began. Like the Passover, it lasted for seven days. It was called the Feast of Ingathering, and also the Feast of Tabernacles, because part of the celebration of it consisted in making booths or bowers in the open air, under which the people dwelt for the seven days while the Festival lasted. This custom still continues, and may be seen in Jewish quarters at the present day. We are told that it was intended to commemorate the dwelling in tents when the people came out of Egypt. In the earlier part of the same month with the third great Festival were two holy-days, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The former was held on the first day of the seventh month. Jewish scholars say that it was to commemorate the creation of the world, when “all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Others regarded it as the anniversary of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. On the tenth day of the month was the great Day of Atonement —a day of humiliation and atonement for the sins and

uncleanness of all Israel. It was on this day that the remarkable ceremony of the scapegoat was observed.

Sacrifices.

(LEVITICUS i-vii.: NUMB. xxviii., xxix.)

The offering of Sacrifices hold an important place in the Jewish ceremonial; and full and minute particulars are given in the law as to the different kinds of Sacrifices, and the order to be observed in performing them. The Book of Leviticus enumerates five distinct kinds of sacrifice, as follows:—

(1). The *Burnt Offering* consisted of a bullock or a ram, a turtle dove or a pigeon. The flesh of the burnt offering was wholly consumed on the altar. The skin was given to the priest.

(2). The *Meat Offering*, or *Minchah*, consisted of corn parched or ground into flour, or baked into cakes or wafers. Oil and salt, and sometimes frankincense, were used with the corn. Honey and leaven were both expressly forbidden. A handful of the meat offering was consumed on the altar, and the remainder given to the priests. In the English name of this sacrifice the word “meat” is used in its earlier signification of food, not of flesh meat.

(3). The *Peace Offering* might be of the herd or of the flock, male or female. Part of it was burnt upon the altar—offered “by fire unto the Lord,” part was given to the priests, and part was consumed by the offerer. A meat offering sometimes accompanied it.

(4). The *Sin Offering*, if offered for the priest or for the congregation, was a bullock; if for a ruler, a male goat;

for any of the common people a less valuable presentation was accepted. In the case of a very poor person a little flour sufficed. Part of the sin offering was consumed on the altar, and part went to the priest, or was destroyed when the priest could not accept it.

(5). When the offence to be atoned for affected the rights of property, and the damage done could be estimated in a pecuniary way, a *Trespass Offering* took the place of the sin offering. It resembled the sin offering, and also included restitution for the wrong done. The amount of the restitution made was one-fifth part more than the damage done. In cases of sacrilege it was to be paid to the Temple. In case of injury done to a private person it was given to the sufferer.

(LEV. i. 4, 5, 9; iii. 17; iv. 5-9 : viii. 14, 15; xvii. 10-16.)

The symbolical meaning of the ritual of the sacrifices is sometimes explained. When the person who offered the sacrifice laid his hand on the head of the victim, as he did in the burnt offering, the peace offering and the sin offering, he thereby, as it were, identified himself with the victim, which was then accepted as "an atonement for him." Burning upon the altar was equivalent to offering to the Lord—it was "offering by fire." The substance consumed ascended to heaven as "a sweet savour." Burning elsewhere, as when the parts of the victim unused in the sacrifice were burned "outside the camp," was merely for the purpose of consuming what was not required for the sacrifice, but ought not to be exposed to any defilement after being connected with the holy rite. The blood was considered to be "the life," and for this reason the use of it for food was expressly forbidden. It was also forbidden to use certain parts of the fat of animals, but no explana-

tion is offered of this prohibition. The throwing of the blood upon the altar was probably only a reverent way of disposing of it, and to be distinguished from sprinkling it in certain cases. In the peace offering the participation of the offerer in the sacrificial meal with the altar and the priests seems like the ratification of peace between the Lord and His ministers and the worshipper.

(NUMB. xxviii., xxix.)

Stated sacrifices were offered on behalf of the whole people every morning and evening, every Sabbath day, every new moon, and at the great festivals.

Clean and Unclean.

(LEV. xi.—xv. : NUMB. v. 1—4 ; xix. : DEUT. xiv. 1—21 ; xxiii. 9—14.)

The ideas of defilement and purification are constantly to be met with in the Jewish religious ceremonies, and the influence of them largely pervades the entire system. Not only persons, but things and places, may become defiled by contact with that which is unclean, or from other causes ; and the rites necessary for their purification occupy a large place amongst the ceremonial laws. There can be no doubt that the observance of these rules about purification contributed greatly to habits of personal cleanliness and the preservation of health. Some persons have therefore been disposed to look upon them as merely sanitary laws, enforced by the sanctions of religion. But this is clearly a mistake. The outward and the visible are types of the inward and spiritual. As uncleanness dishonours the body and renders it unfit for its highest uses, so sin defiles the soul ; as the body must be purified from the filth of the flesh, so must the soul be cleansed from sin. It is impos-

sible to explain the existence of these rules about purification, which are common to so many ancient religions, as if they were only sanitary laws. They have a deeper root in the necessary connexion which we feel to exist between a regard for external cleanliness and purity of heart. There is a truth, which many persons do not suspect, in the old adage that cleanliness is next to godliness. It is this truth which renders these external purifications of the body so suitable as signs of that internal purification of the spirit and life, to which they are intended to lead the thoughts of the worshipper.

The Tabernacle.

(Ex. xxv.—xxvii. : 1 KINGS vi.)

Elaborate directions are given in the book of Exodus for the construction of the Tabernacle, the measurements and materials being carefully specified—the latter of the most rare and costly kind. The Tabernacle itself was an oblong tent, thirty cubits long and ten wide. It was constructed of a moveable wooden framework, all the wood being sheeted in gold, with golden fittings, and the upright timbers resting in silver sockets. This framework was heavily covered by four curtains, one over the other, of different materials. The interior was divided by a hanging curtain into two chambers, the inner one, called the holy of holies, being ten cubits square, the outer one twenty by ten. This tent stood in an enclosed court, also oblong, being one hundred cubits by fifty; the enclosing fence being made of brass railings, from which curtains of “fine twined linen” were suspended by silver hooks and fillets. The whole, therefore, consisted of three parts:—(1) the outer court in which stood the large altar, or altar

of burnt offerings. This altar was five cubits square, and three cubits high; it had four “horns” at the corners. This court also contained a brazen laver, at which the priests washed their hands and their feet before engaging in any service of the sanctuary. (2) Next to the court came the holy place—the outer chamber of the tabernacle proper. None but the priests were allowed to enter it. In it stood the golden candlestick on one side, the table of shewbread opposite, and the altar of incense in the centre between them. (3) The inner chamber—the holy of holies—was only entered by the high priest on certain most solemn occasions. It contained the mercy-seat “of pure gold,” on which was placed the ark containing the tables of the law. The ark was overshadowed by the extended wings of the golden cherubim, which stood one on each end of the mercy-seat.

When the moveable tent temple of the Hebrews was replaced by a permanent building, in Solomon’s reign, all the principal parts of the tabernacle were preserved in the new structure, under the same names. The proportions of the temple were also generally the same as those of the tabernacle, though the scale was larger.

Priests and Levites.

(Ex. xxviii. ; xxix. ; LEV. vii. 28–38; viii. ; ix. ; xvi. ; xxii. ; xxv. 32–35; NUMB. i. 47–54; iii. ; iv. ; viii. ; xviii. ; xxxv. ; DEUT. x. 8–9.)

All duties in connexion with the tabernacle and temple were performed by the members of the tribe of Levi. This tribe had no possessions of land in Canaan; they received only certain cities with their environs to dwell in. They received tithes from the other tribes. Aaron’s family, from which the priests were taken, was a branch of the tribe of Levi.

Miscellaneous.

The reader who wishes to study the provisions of the Jewish Law upon some other important subjects may find the following references useful :—

Dedication of first fruits.—Ex. xiii. 2, 11–16; xxii. 29–30; xxxiv. 19–20: Lev. xxvii. 26–33: Numb. iii. 11–12; xviii. 12–17: Deut. xv. 19–23.

Judges, judicial procedure, evidence, sentence, &c.—Ex. xviii. 13–26; xxii. 7–13, 28; xxiii. 3: Lev. xix. 11, 15; xxiv. 10–23: Numb. v. 11–31: Deut. i. 9–18; xvi. 18–20; xvii. 8–13; xix. ; xxii. 1–9, 22, 23; xxii. 24.

Money-lending, usury, &c.—Ex. xxii. 25–27: Lev. xxv. 35–38: Deut. xxiii. 19–20; xxiv. 10–13.

Sabbatical year, year of jubilee, &c.—Ex. xxi. 2; xxiii. 10–12: Lev. xxv. : Deut. xv. 1–18; xxxi. 9–13.

Strangers, treatment of.—Ex. xii. 38, 43–51; xx. 10; xxii. 21; xxiii. 9: Lev. xvi. 29; xix. 9, 10, 33, 34; xxv. 44, 55: Numb. ix. 14; xv. 14–16; xxxv. 15: Deut. i. 16; x. 18, 19; xvii. 15; xxii. 19, 20.

Taxation, provision for poor, &c.—Ex. xxx. 11–16: Lev. xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 22; xxvii. 26–33: Numb. iii. 44–51; vii. ; xviii. 20–32: Deut. xiv. 22–29; xxiv. 19–22.

Vows.—Lev. xxvii. : Numb. vi. 1–21; xxx. : Deut. xxiii. 21–23.

Warfare, military service, treatment of captives, &c.—Numb. i. 20; x. 9: Deut. xx. ; xxi. 10–14; xxiii. 9–14; xxiv. 5.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOOKS OF JOSHUA, JUDGES, AND RUTH.

The Book of Joshua.

ON the death of Moses the lawgiver the guidance of the people passes into the hands of Joshua the man of war; and the Book of Joshua gives a vivid account of the occupation of the land of Canaan under his command. Immediately on his appointment the new leader, strong in the assurance of the Lord's assistance, leads the tribes across the Jordan, the waters once again miraculously standing on a heap, as in the Red Sea, to let the chosen people pass. The tribe of Reuben, of Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had already received their inheritance on the eastern side of the river, in territory that had been won in the time of Moses; and the warriors of these tribes march in the van of the invading army, in accordance with their promise to hold this post of danger until the Lord should "have given their brethren rest, as He had given them." Jericho, the first large town in their line of march, is delivered into their hands by a miracle. Ai is taken by stratagem, after a momentary failure of courage on the part of the assailants. Alarmed at these successes, the chiefs of Canaan combine against the invaders. But no power can stand before the people of God. Five kings of the south, marching to punish Gibeon, a "royal city" that had submitted to Joshua, are surprised by a night march, and utterly defeated. The Lord rains hailstones from heaven upon their flying forces, and the

hailstones slay "more than the children of Israel slew with the sword," while the sun and moon stand still in the heavens until the soldiers of God avenge themselves upon their enemies. After the battle the kings are taken from the cave to which they had fled, and are put to death, and their bodies hanged upon five trees "until the evening."

Having completely subdued the south, where "he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded," Joshua, by another rapid march, comes suddenly upon the kings of the north, who had assembled at the summons of Jabin, king of Hazor. By the waters of Merom, the northernmost expansion of the Jordan stream, he routs a host "as the sand that is on the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many," and Israel smites them till they leave them "none remaining." They "hough their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

Next, the Anakim, the children of the giants, are exterminated, and then the people proceed to divide the land. But though the land is all nominally divided between the remaining tribes, part of it is still actually in the possession of the Canaanites, who had not been conquered, and whose presence will be the fruitful source of future troubles.

The Book of Judges.

The next book exhibits a very different view of the state of the people of Israel from that which was presented by the Book of Joshua. Instead of the victorious people united under one head, and bonded together in the enthusiasm of a great enterprise, and in devotion to one religion, we find in the Book of Judges a number of separate tribes without any common government, for the most part acting

without concord among themselves, and, in their divided state, unable to maintain their independence against the neighbouring powers. This state of things, we are told, only came about after the death of Joshua and of the generation “ who had seen all the great works of the Lord, which He did for Israel” in Joshua’s time, and when “ there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel.” Then they began to “ follow other gods,” and were delivered “ into the hands of their enemies round about,” until the Lord in His mercy raised up “ judges” to deliver them.¹

The Book of Judges is composed of a series of independent narratives, for the most part recording the warlike exploits of these judges. The book is full of life and spirit, but it pictures a time of the greatest lawlessness and violence. In reading it we must be careful to notice that each narrative only concerns a particular tribe or locality, and that the authority of the ruler mentioned does not appear to have extended beyond the limits of that part of the country to which the narrative refers. It is even possible that there may have been two or more judges ruling simultaneously in different parts of the country, a consideration which should be borne in mind in attempting to make out the chronology of the time.

The principal heroes of the Book of Judges are Othniel the vanquisher of Chusannishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; Ehud the daring assassin of Eglon, king of Moab; Shamgar the son of Anath, “ which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad”; Deborah the woman-judge, and Jael the fierce slayer of her sleeping guest; Gideon the destroyer of Baal; Abimelech the usurper;

¹ Judges, ii. 7-23.

Jephthah, who, rather than break the vow which he had rashly made to Jehovah, sacrificed his only daughter; and Samson, the strong man. These are the leaders of a time the character of which is pithily summed up in the last words of the book :—“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

(JUDGES, xix.—xxi.)

Once, however, if only once in all this period, do we read that “all the men of Israel were . . . knit together as one man,” and then it was not against a foreign enemy, but to wreak a terrible vengeance on one of their own tribes for harbouring the perpetrator of a crime dishonouring to the name of the God of Israel.

The Hebrew Heroes.

In judging of the heroes of these primitive times we must bear in mind the circumstances in which they lived, and the age in which these books were written. We are not to expect from those times the virtues or the advanced religious knowledge which are to be found in later times in the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself warned us of this when He said that John the Baptist was greater than any of the prophets that were before him, but that the least in the kingdom of heaven (that is, in the Christian Church which He founded) was greater than he. On the other hand, the religious earnestness and general elevation of character of these Old Testament worthies will come out more strongly when we contrast them with the state of the times in which they lived.

The Book of Ruth.

This book introduces us to very different scenes from those depicted in the Book of Judges, to which it forms an appendix. In simple and touching language it tells how, in the days when the judges ruled, a Jewish family left the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, in consequence of a famine, to settle in the country of the Moabites on the other side of the Jordan. There the father died, leaving his two sons with their mother. After a time the sons, who had married wives of the Moabite women, also died. When her husband and her two sons were gone, the desolate mother Naomi set out to return to her own land, advising her daughters-in-law to remain with their own people, where they might marry again and make homes for themselves. But one of them, Ruth, refused to separate from the mother of her dead husband, and resolved to accompany her to the land of Israel. The beautiful words in which Ruth expresses her resolution to share the fortunes of Naomi are often quoted :—

“ Intreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee :
For whither thou goest I will go ;
And where thou lodgest I will lodge :
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God.
Where thou diest I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If ought but death part thee and me.”

The unselfishness of Ruth’s conduct met with a fitting reward. On their return to Bethlehem, where the story of Naomi’s sorrows excited much sympathy, the younger woman goes to glean in the fields of Boaz, a rich farmer.

Boaz, sharing the general feeling in favour of the two women, bids his people to be kind to her, and tells the reapers to let some handfuls of corn fall on purpose in her way. It afterwards turns out that Boaz is a kinsman of Naomi's deceased husband; and in accordance with the Jewish custom, he redeems the inheritance of the family and marries Ruth. From the Moabitish stranger Ruth is traced the descent of David the king of Israel, and of Another greater than David.

This charming story is an agreeable appendage to the Book of Judges. It is pleasant to turn from scenes of violence and bloodshed to the peaceful harvest-field of Boaz, and the quiet village life of Bethlehem, and to be reminded that the life of the people of God in those days was not all fighting, but that God's people in the olden time knew what it was to be good men and women in peace, as well as brave soldiers in war.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNDIVIDED KINGDOM.

Authorities for the Regal Period.

THE two Books of Samuel and the two Books of Kings form one consecutive history of the Hebrew Monarchy. They are also called the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Books of the Kings.

The two Books of Chronicles, which follow these books, contain a separate record of the same period, so that we have in the Old Testament two consecutive histories of the times of the Monarchy.

The Prophetical Books, of which we shall speak in their own place, also supply us with some additional particulars of the history, and throw much light upon the character of the time.

We shall now give an outline of the contents of the Books of Samuel and Kings. These books continue the narrative of the Books of Judges and Ruth. The Book of Joshua is more closely connected with the Pentateuch, though the history runs on through all.

Eli.

(1 SAM. i.-iv.)

The First Book of Samuel covers the period of transition from the rule of the Judges to that of the Kings, and relates the reign of Saul, the first king. At the opening of the book we find Eli, who has not been previously men-

tioned, occupying the position of judge. He is priest as well as judge, and ministers before the Ark in Shiloh, the spot which had been selected in the time of Joshua as the religious centre of the tribes, but which is now soon to give place to a more famous sanctuary. Eli himself is represented as a good old man, but the wickedness of his sons forbids the continuance of the government in his family, and a terrible judgment falls on them and on their aged father in consequence of their evil deeds. The two sons are slain in one day in a battle against the Philistines, in which the Israelitish army is routed with great slaughter. In the same battle the Ark, which had been brought from Shiloh to the camp in hopes of securing victory for the arms of Israel, falls into the hand of the enemy; and the old man Eli, who was sitting at the gate of the city waiting anxiously for tidings of the battle, when he hears that the Ark of God is taken, falls heavily to the earth and is killed.

Samuel.

(1 SAM. vii.-x.)

After Eli the guidance of the people passes in due time into the hands of Samuel the prophet. Samuel, from whom the first two books of the monarchy derive their title, as the first five books of the Bible do from Moses, is one of the great names of Hebrew history, and his influence upon the course which it took was probably only second to that of the great lawgiver himself. The greatness of his character is shown by the way in which he met the inevitable change in the constitution of the nation which was to take place in his day. When he was old, and his sons, like the sons of Eli, walked not in their

father's ways, the people demanded that he should appoint a king over them, that they might be like the other nations which were around them. Though Samuel was at first greatly displeased at this request, and was fully sensible of the abuses to which the regal power would be liable, yet when he found it to be the will of God that the "old order" should "yield place to the new," he complied with the request of the nation, and appointed a king; and during the remainder of his long life he watched over the fortunes of the people with the same anxious devotion as if the new order of things had been entirely of his own choosing.

Saul, the first King.

(1 SAM. x.-xvi.)

Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, was the first king of united Israel. He proved an able commander in war, and immediately after his appointment won the hearts of the whole nation by his brilliant rescue of the town of Jabesh Gilead, which was on the point of being surrendered to the Ammonites. But the later years of his reign did not fulfil its early promise. In spite of occasional successes on the side of Israel, due chiefly to the personal valour of Saul and his heroic son Jonathan, a harassing and exhausting war with the Philistines continued. Saul's disregard of the counsels of Samuel gradually alienated the prophet from the king, and at last caused a complete separation between them. In despising the inspired directions of Samuel, Saul "rejected the word of the Lord," and the Lord "rejected" him "from being king." Some one else must be sought to found the line of Hebrew kings. The prophet, there-

fore, unknown to Saul, anointed David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, to succeed Saul on the throne.

Saul and David.

(1 SAM. xvi.-xxxii.)

After this the king became subject to some form of madness—"an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." In all the kingdom no one could be found to soothe the vexed spirit of the king like the young David. At the sound of his sweet playing upon the harp "Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." David was thus introduced to Court life. He soon showed himself a good soldier as well as a musician, and he became the king's armour-bearer. But his growing popularity with the nation aroused a great jealousy in the mind of the king. When he slew the huge Philistine giant Goliath, the women sang that "Saul had slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands"; and more than once the passionate king, in his frenzy, attempted to slay him. In the end David had to flee from the Court, and maintain himself by the sword in the southern borders of Judah, with a band of outlawed followers. This was the position of affairs when Saul's death opened the way to David to take the crown for which in the providence of God he had been selected. At the fatal battle of Gilboa, Saul's army was defeated by the Philistines with great slaughter; and the first king of Israel, his army defeated, his three sons lying dead upon the field of battle, and himself "sore wounded of the archers," fell upon his own sword and died.

The First Book of Samuel.

The First Book of Samuel, from which we have taken this outline of the histories of Eli, Samuel, and Saul, is full of interesting matter. It contains the well-known account of the birth and childhood of Samuel, and the story of Eli and his sons;¹ the adventures of the Ark in the country of the Philistines, and its final restoration to Israel;² the appointment of the first king, and the rescue of Jabesh-Gilead;³ Samuel's farewell address to his countrymen;⁴ the warlike exploits of Saul and Jonathan, and the two errors that lost Saul the kingdom;⁵ the early life of David—his being anointed by Samuel as heir to the kingdom—his battle with the huge Philistine giant—Saul's persecution of him—the friendship between him and Jonathan the son of Saul—his many adventures and hairbreadth escapes while he fled from Saul.⁶ All of these, with the gloomy picture of Saul's visit to the witch of Endor;⁷ his last great fight at Gilboa, and the gratitude of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, who requited the service which he had rendered to them at the beginning of his reign by rescuing his body and the bodies of his sons from the hands of the Philistines,⁸ have made the First Book of Samuel a special favourite with both old and young.

King David.

(2 SAM. i.—xxiv.)

David was at Ziklag, a southern town of which the situation is uncertain, when he heard of Saul's death.

¹ Ch. i.-iv.⁴ Ch. xii.⁷ Ch. xxviii.² Ch. v.-vii.⁵ Ch. xiii.-xv.⁸ Ch. xxxi.³ Ch. viii.-xi.⁶ Ch. xvi.-xxvii.

Some days before he had been marching with the Philistines, with whom he had friendly relations, but had left them to return to Ziklag. On reaching the town he found that it had been sacked by the Amalekites in his absence, and he set out on an expedition still further from the scene of Saul's disaster to punish the marauders and recover the spoil. It was two days after his return from this expedition that the news of the battle of Gilboa reached him. The historian is careful to give these particulars, apparently with the view of saving David from any appearance of complicity in the death of Saul. He also tells us how David ordered the man who brought the news of the battle to be put to death, because he claimed, whether truly or falsely, to have had a hand in killing the king; and he preserves to us the touching Psalm in which David "lamented over Saul, and over Jonathan his son."

Soon after the death of Saul, David moved to Hebron, a city of Judah, and was recognised as king by the great tribe of the south. North of Judah it would appear as if the Philistines held a large part of the country in subjection after the victory at Gilboa, and Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was set up as king at Mahanaim beyond the Jordan by Abner, who had been commander-in-chief of his father's army. After a time Abner was treacherously slain by Joab, David's nephew and general. The cause of Ishbosheth "waxed weaker and weaker," and he was at last assassinated by two of his followers, who brought his head to David, from whom they received the same reward of their treachery as the messenger of Saul's death had received before. David was then acknowledged as sole sovereign. He established himself at Jerusalem, which was now for the first time taken from the old inhabitants of the land, and made the capital of the twelve tribes.

Here David completed the forty years of his reign, and hither, with due pomp and ceremony, he brought the Ark of God, which had been recovered from its Philistine captivity, and located it in a city which was henceforth to be associated with the name and religion of the Jewish people, and to be the scene of some of the most momentous events in the history of the human race.

In David's reign the Hebrews obtained a position among the nations which they had never held before. Under the command of Joab and his brother Abishai the armies of Israel were successful on every side. The Philistines, who had long been their most formidable enemies, and who, after the battle of Gilboa, threatened to overrun the whole country west of the Jordan, and to drive the Hebrews out of the land, were reduced to order, and compelled to confine themselves to the slip of coast territory which bears their name on the map. The Amalekites were "subdued," and "all they of Edom became David's servants." The Moabites were made tributary, and the Ammonites were conquered, though supported by a strong Syrian alliance. The Syrians themselves felt the weight of the arm of Israel, and acknowledged the rule of David eastward as far as the Euphrates, and far away to the north beyond Damascus which was garrisoned by David, even to Hamath in the valley of the distant Orontes.¹

The Character of David.

The character of David, as it appears from the narrative of his life, and as it has been filled out with the aid of the Psalms that bear his name, all of which have been not uncommonly assumed to be his composition, has long been a favourite subject with religious writers, and has ex-

¹ 2 Sam. viii.

ercised a wide influence for good upon the lives of mankind. It was David's religious character, more than his military exploits or his political successes, that made him, and not his more splendid successor, the typical ruler of God's people : so that the greatest of his descendants was not unworthily called the Son of David. The value of the portrait, as well as the beauty of it, is enhanced by the fact that his biographer has not concealed his sins, or the sorrows in which they involved him. We may quote once more an often-quoted passage on this subject :—“David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of sin. And therefore your unbelievers sneer, and ask, ‘Is this your man according to God’s heart?’ The sneer, I must say, seems to me a shallow one. What are faults—what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it—the remorse—temptations—the often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it be forgotten? . . . David’s life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given to us of a man’s moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best—struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck ; yet a struggle never ended—ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose begun anew.”¹ “The last words of David”—last and sweetest of all the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, as they are rendered in the present English version of the Second Book of Samuel,² suggest a similar view of the character of David, and fitly supplement the utterance of the Chelsea

¹ Carlyle: *Heroes and Hero-worship*, p. 219.

² 2 Samuel xxiii. 1–7. Some scholars translate verse 5—“Is not my house so with God, that he hath made,” &c.

prophet. It is not on his actual attainments in goodness that man's hope depends, but on faith in God, who has called him to glory and virtue :—“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure : for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

Absalom's Rebellion.

(2 SAM. xv.—xviii.)

The greatest of David's trials was the rebellion of his favourite son Absalom, who very nearly succeeded in his impious attempt to drive his father from the throne. The story of the event is told with great power. David was at first taken by surprise, and had to leave Jerusalem, and retreat across the Jordan with the military force which remained faithful to him, and take shelter in the fortress of Mahanaim. When Absalom's army crossed the river, a battle was fought before the walls of Mahanaim, in “the wood of Ephraim”; and the king's forces, under the command of his three generals, Joab and Abishai and Ittai the Gittite, a faithful Philistine soldier who had attached himself to the fortunes of David, completely routed the rebels. But in the pursuit after the battle Absalom was slain by Joab, in spite of the king's special injunctions that his life should be spared ; and the death of his son almost made the victory more painful to David than a defeat would have been.

Adonijah's Rebellion.

(1 KINGS i.)

Absalom was not the only one of David's sons who gave him trouble. When the king was old and feeble,

Adonijah, another favourite of the same type as Absalom, made an attempt with the aid of Joab and Abiathar the priest to secure the throne for himself. When this attempt was defeated, Solomon the son of David and Bathsheba, was designated by the aged king as his successor; and when his father died, Solomon quietly occupied the throne. These events and the reign of Solomon are the subjects of eleven chapters in the First Book of the Kings.

Solomon.

(1 KINGS ii.-xi.)

In the reign of Solomon, the Hebrew empire reached its greatest height of material splendour. The wars of Saul and David were succeeded by a time of peace, during which population and wealth greatly increased under the wise administration of the new king. If we except a few events of its closing years, the history of his reign is a continued record of unbroken prosperity and magnificence. We read of the princes who were over the different departments of the state; of the twelve officers whose duty it was to provide victuals for the king and his household, each during a month in turn; of the vast amount of provisions required for each day's supply; of the king's forty thousand stalls of chariot horses, and his twelve thousand horsemen. Fortifications and frontier cities were built or strengthened. Jerusalem was adorned with splendid buildings, and the temple—Solomon's temple—was built and dedicated for the reception of the Ark. Solomon also encouraged trade with foreign nations; and now, for the first time, we read of the Jews engaging in maritime commerce. They had navies trading to the east and to the west, on the Red Sea and on the Mediterranean. The historian

dwells with enthusiastic admiration on the wealth and splendour of the times, and on the wisdom of their famous king, whose reputation brought eager inquiries from “all the earth” to Jerusalem. “King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.” He “made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he to be as the sycomore trees that are in the vale for abundance.” “And all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom which God hath put in his heart.”

Very different are the feelings with which he tells how Solomon, when he had married many wives of the surrounding nations, which were not of the Hebrew religion, tolerated their foreign religions, and encouraged the practice of heathen rites in Jerusalem;—“it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites”; and he built “an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.”

The Times of Solomon.

Though the historian is so decided in his condemnation of the wise king for the course which he took in dealing with foreign religions, it does not appear that Solomon himself ever left the religion of Jehovah, or that he sacrificed with his own hands to heathen gods; and religious toleration would seem to have been the necessary growth of an age in which the new development of commerce

brought the Jews into friendly communication with so many foreign peoples, and when the extended limits of their own empire must have included within them many diverse forms of religion. Solomon may have been in error in attempting to anticipate a state of religious toleration for which the times were not ripe. It will give a practical turn to our thoughts on this question if we reflect that the circumstances of our own day are, in many respects, like the state of things which is described in the history of Solomon's reign. We, too, live under an empire within which the greatest possible variety of opinion exists on almost every subject; and the increased intercourse between nations, as well as the investigations of learned men, have afforded us the opportunity of acquiring a more accurate knowledge of the various religions of the world than it was possible for our forefathers to possess. It is a great advantage of such a state of things that men are led to tolerate differences of opinion; to consider the beliefs of others as well as their own, estimating them fairly and without prejudice, and to be ready to acknowledge whatever goodness or truth may be found in any sect or denomination, even where we believe it to be accompanied by error. But there is a corresponding danger, against which we should be ever on our guard. There is the danger that toleration may degenerate into indifference, that good-nature should usurp the place of principle, and that men should be too ready weakly to surrender or to suppress their own convictions, as if there were no real standard of truth, or as if truth were entirely unattainable by us.

In another respect also the age of Solomon resembles our own. It was an age in which there were many comforts and refinements; there was good living; there were

luxurious dwellings, gorgeous public buildings, costly works of art. It is the well-known tendency of such an age to make men self-indulgent ; to render them less inclined to make sacrifices for the sake of duty, and to break down the strength of principle and of will which is sometimes the growth of rougher times.

It will be a useful exercise for us to compare the days of Solomon with the earlier days of Joshua and the Judges, of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, and of Gideon the destroyer of Baal. And it will be well for us if our study of the Bible leads us, with God's help, to emulate the peculiar virtues of every age, while we avoid its faults. The many comforts of modern life, even its culture and refinements, would be dearly purchased indeed if they could only be had at the cost of earnestness and zeal and real generosity.

We shall now see that the reign of Solomon, in spite of its magnificence and splendour, was the precursor of a great calamity to the Hebrew nation, from which it never quite recovered.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

The Disruption.

(1 KINGS xii. 1-20.)

IT is evident that Solomon's expensive administration could not have been kept up without imposing heavy burdens upon his people. And we are not surprised to find that some of them objected to supporting a state of magnificence from which they did not see that they themselves derived any compensating advantage.

When Solomon was dead, and when all Israel had assembled at Shechem "to make" his son Rehoboam king, before agreeing to accept the new ruler, the northern tribes, acting under the guidance of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, demanded that the weight of their burdens should be lightened. The wise old men who had been his father's counsellors advised Rehoboam to return a conciliatory answer to this demand; but the son of Solomon preferred to take the advice of his own gay companions, and met the request for a milder rule with an uncompromising and scornful refusal. The consequence of this foolish act was the immediate rejection of his authority by "all Israel"—that is, by all the tribes of the north. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin alone, with Jerusalem, David's capital, remained faithful to the son of Solomon. The revolting tribes appointed Jeroboam their king.

There is reason to believe that this separation of the kingdom into two parts was not so unexpected an event as it would appear to have been, if we only knew the story of Rehoboam's coronation. Already in the time of Solomon Jeroboam had been obliged to fly the kingdom in consequence of his ambitious designs, and it is probable that he aimed even then at drawing away the northern tribes from their allegiance to the house of David.¹ It is not unlikely that these tribes were never quite reconciled to the supremacy of Judah and Benjamin, which would seem to be implied in the selection of the first three kings from the two tribes of the South.

It would also appear that there was a religious element in the causes which led to the revolt; for in the account of Jeroboam's first "lifting up his hand" against Solomon the coming disruption of the kingdom is announced as a judgment on the idolatries of Solomon's reign, and the designs of Jeroboam are countenanced by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite.

Whatever were the causes that led to the division, the breach was irreparable. The kingdoms of Judah and Israel continued separate till both were destroyed. During the remaining chapters of the Books of the Kings the history follows a divided line, passing back and forward from the one kingdom to the other with a rapidity by which the reader is sometimes liable to be confused. It will not be possible for us here to refer to the particulars of the different reigns. We can only give, in the following Table, the names and order of the several kings, with the length of the reign of each, taken from the Books of Kings; and then briefly indicate in a general way the course which events took in each of the two kingdoms.

¹ 1 Kings xi. 26-40.

Table of the Kings of Judah and of Israel.

N.B.—The brackets are intended to show the relative dates of the kings in the two lines. Thus, the first bracket means that Asa's reign in Judah began while Jeroboam was ruling in Israel and ended in the time of Ahab, Asa having been thus contemporary with seven kings of Israel. Similarly Ahab's reign is shown to have begun in the reign of Asa and ended in that of Jehoshaphat; Jehoshaphat having been contemporary with Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram; and so on.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

REHOBOAM. 17 years.

(I. K. xii. 1–24; xiv. 21–31.)

ABIJAM. 3 years.

(I. K. xv. 1–8.)

ASA. 41 years.

(I. K. xv. 9–24.)

JEHOSHAPHAT. 25 years.

(I. K. xxii. 41–50.)

JEHORAM. 8 years.

(II. K. viii. 16–24.)

AHAZIAH. 1 year.

(II. K. viii. 25–ix. 29.)

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM. 22 years.

(I. K. xii. 25–xiv. 20.)

NADAB. 2 years.

(I. K. xv. 25–31.)

*BAASHA. 24 years.

(I. K. xv. 27–xvi. 7.)

ELAH. 2 years.

(I. K. xvi. 8–10.)

*ZIMRI. 7 days.

(I. K. xvi. 11–20.)

[Two years' civil war.]

*OMRI. 12 years.

(I. K. xvi. 21–28.)

Ahab. 22 years.

(I. K. xvi. 29–xxii. 40.)

AHAZIAH. 2 years.

(I. K. xxii. 51–H. K. i. 15.)

JEHORAM. 12 years.

(II. K. iii. 1–ix. 26.)

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| KINGS OF JUDAH— <i>continued.</i> | KINGS OF ISRAEL— <i>continued.</i> |
| QUEEN ATHALIAH. 6 years. (II. K. xi.) | *JEHU. 28 years. (II. K. ix., x.) |
| JEHOASH (Joash). 40 years. (II. K. xii.) | JEHOAHAZ. 17 years. (II. K. xiii. 1–9.) |
| AMAZIAH. 29 years. (II. K. xiv. 1–20.) | JEHOASH (Joash). 16 years. (II. K. xiii. 10–25.) |
| | JEROBOAM II. 41 years. (II. K. xiv. 23–29.) |
| | [Eleven years' interregnum.] |
| | ZACHARIAH. 6 months. (II. K. xv. 8–12.) |
| AZARIAH (Uzziah). 52 years. (II. K. xiv. 21, 22; xv. 1–7.) | *SHALLUM. 1 month. (II. K. xv. 13–15.) |
| | *MENACHEM. 10 years. (II. K. xv. 16–22.) |
| | PEKAHIAH. 2 years. (II. K. xv. 23–26.) |
| JOTHAM. 16 years. (II. K. xv. 32–38.) | *PEKAH. 20 years. (II. K. xv. 27–31.) |
| AHAZ. 16 years. (II. K. xvi.) | *HOSHEA. 9 years. (II. K. xvii. 1–23.) |
| ZEZEKIAH. 29 years. (II. K. xviii.–xx.) | |

KINGS OF JUDAH—*continued.* KINGS OF ISRAEL—*continued.*

MANASSEH. 55 years.

(II. K. xxi. 1–18.)

AMON. 2 years.

(II. K. xxi. 19–26.)

JOSIAH. 31 years.

(II. K. xxii. 1–xxiii. 30.)

JEHOAHAZ (Shallum, Jer. xxii. 11).

3 months.

(II. K. xxiii. 31–34.)

JEHOIAKIM. 11 years.

(II. K. xxiii. 34–xxiv. 7.)

JEHOIACHIN (Jechoniah, Coniah).

3 months.

(II. K. xxiv. 8–16.)

ZEDEKIAH. 11 years.

(II. K. xxiv. 17–xxv. 7.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE TEN TRIBES.

Internal Revolutions.

THE asterisks prefixed to the names of eight of the kings of Israel in the foregoing Table indicate so many changes of dynasty. And it will be the shortest way of giving some idea of the troubled course which the domestic history of the Ten Tribes ran, when we mention that every change of dynasty was accomplished by force. Not one of these eight kings succeeded to the throne of Israel without seeing his predecessor die by a violent death.

The Sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

(1 KINGS xii. 25–xiii. 34.)

When the nation was divided, Jeroboam established a new form of worship for his own people. He “made two calves of gold,” and set them up in Bethel and in Dan, two cities which lay one in the south, and the other at the extreme north of his kingdom, and which already possessed a sacred character in the traditions of Israel. He also instituted a new order of priests—he “made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi”; the Levites having probably remained faithful to the services of Solomon’s Temple; and he established a new festival in the eighth month instead of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, which was held a month earlier.

It is nowhere implied that in making these changes Jeroboam had any intention of deserting the worship of the God of Israel. The writer of the Book of Kings assigns as the motive of his religious policy simply a desire to provide the people of the Ten Tribes with places of worship in their own territory, lest they should be drawn away from their allegiance to his rule by going to the Temple at Jerusalem: and says that he offered the golden calves, for the worship of the people, as representing the God which brought them up out of Egypt. But the schism which he wilfully made in the national Church was fraught with disastrous consequences in the future, and his religious institutions are condemned in the most unqualified terms. Throughout the Books of Kings they are invariably spoken of as “the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat,” and in consequence of them the first king of Israel is described, with equal persistency, as “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.”

The House of Omri; Elijah, Elisha, the City of Samaria.

(1 KINGS xvi. 23 to 2 KINGS x. 11.)

But a worse evil was introduced by Ahab the son of Omri, the second king of the fourth dynasty. “It came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.” Not only did Ahab serve Baal, but he allowed his wife to carry on an exterminating persecution of the prophets of Jehovah. It is in opposition to the idolatries and wicked-

ness of this bad king that the prophet Elijah the Tishbite first appears upon the scene, and the striking figure of the faithful servant of Jehovah occupies a prominent place in this part of the history of Israel. His contest with the prophets of Baal upon Mount Carmel, his own despondency at the condition of his country and the revival of his drooping faith amid the solitudes of Sinai, his bold rebuke of Ahab in the matter of Naboth's vineyard, and the story of his miraculous removal from the earth, are the most remarkable episodes in these chapters. After the removal of Elijah his place was taken by Elisha, of whom many wonders are related. Elisha anointed Jehu captain of the host of Israel, to supersede the idolatrous house of Omri, and with an unsparing hand the fierce soldier swept away the apostate race. "With the edge of the sword" Jehu "destroyed Baal out of Israel."

Omri, the first king of this dynasty, "bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria." The city, the origin of which is thus recorded, became the capital of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, and has had a history almost as remarkable as that of Jerusalem. It was situated on the top of a hill, which rose with steep sides from the basin of a sheltered valley; and the same site is now occupied by a village, the name of which connects it with the ancient capital. Before the time of Omri the capital had been first at Shechem, and then at Tirzah, both ancient Canaanite cities, the latter famous for its beauty.¹

¹ The following references will enable the reader to trace the history of these capitals:—1 K. xii. 1, 25 (*see* Judges ix. 45); xiv. 17 (*see* Cant. vi. 1); xv. 21, 33; xvi. 6–18, 23, 24, 32; xx. 1: 2 K. vi. 24–vii. 20; x. 25–27; xv. 13–18; xvii. 5, 6; xviii. 9, 10.

Dynasty of Jehu; Jeroboam, the son of Joash.

(2 KINGS x. 15-36; xiii; xiv. 8-16, 23-29; xv. 8-12.)

But though Jehu exhibited such zeal against the worshippers of Baal, he “took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart : for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.” The schismatical institutions of Jeroboam, in fact, continued as long as the kingdom of Israel lasted ; unless we are to make a possible exception during the reign of Hoshea the last king. We are told of him, as of the other kings of Israel,¹ that “he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,” “but not,” the historian adds, “as the kings of Israel that were before him.” A Jewish comment on the exception which is thus made in favour of Hoshea, explains it by saying that he allowed his subjects to attend the worship of the Temple at Jerusalem.

The family of Jehu remained in possession of the throne of Israel longer than any other. Jeroboam the Second, who came third in succession after Jehu, reigned for forty-one years, and seems to have been the most powerful and successful of the kings of Israel. The account given of his reign is very brief, but it tells us that “he recovered Damascus and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel,” and “restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain.” The expression “the entering of Hamath” refers to the pass from the north along the valley of the Orontes, which the city of Hamath commanded ; the “sea of the plain” is the Dead Sea; and the meaning of the whole account of his victories is, that he re-established the authority of Israel over all the

¹ The only one upon whom this verdict is not pronounced is Shallum, who “reigned a full month.”

territory to the north and east, which had been subject to Solomon in the most prosperous days of the undivided kingdom. In the end of Solomon's reign there had been a revolt against his authority at Damascus, and after the division of Solomon's kingdom Damascus had become the seat of a most formidable Syrian power.

The Syrians.

The Syrians of Damascus were the most important foreign power with which the kingdom of Israel had as yet come in contact, and frequent wars with them occupy a large part of the annals of the northern kingdom. The relations between the Israelites and the Syrians were not, however, always of a hostile character, and there are some interesting passages in the life of Elisha the prophet which show that friendly feelings sometimes existed between the people of the two kingdoms. On one occasion Elisha is even related to have appeared in his prophetic character at the capital of the Syrian king.¹

The Assyrians.

(2 KINGS xv. 19, 20, 29; xvii.)

But a mightier power than either Syrians or Israelites had arisen—a power before which both the one and the other were to go down. This was the Assyrian empire, whose conquering armies were now approaching the borders of Palestine. In the reign of Menahem, who came to the throne about twelve years after the death of Jeroboam II., the Assyrians invaded Israel, under a king whose name appears in the English Bible as Pul. Again,

¹ 2 Kings viii. 7-15.

"in the days of Pekah came Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria," and seized all the Israelitish territory to the east of Jordan, and carried away the inhabitants into captivity. Pekah's successor was Hoshea, and in his time the end came. The country was once again invaded by the Assyrians, and Hoshea reduced to the condition of a tributary. Attempting to rid himself of this yoke by the aid of Egypt, he was thrown into prison by the Assyrian king. Then the Assyrian army invaded Israel for the last time. They took Samaria after a three years' siege, and, according to their usual custom in dealing with conquered nations, removed all the inhabitants of the country to other regions of their vast dominions. They "carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

CHAPTER VIII.

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

War between Judah and Israel.

(1 KINGS xii. 21–24; xiv. 25–31; xv. 6, 7, 16–22.)

WHEN the ten tribes revolted, Rehoboam raised an army to compel them to return to their allegiance to the House of David. But the tribe of Judah was forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah to “fight against their brethren the children of Israel.” In spite of the prophet’s prohibition we read that there was war between Judah and Israel all the days of Rehoboam, and of the two following kings of Judah. It is possible, however, that this means, not that there was actual warfare going on during all this time, but that there was an unfriendly feeling between the two countries, which at times broke out into actual hostilities.¹ It may have been in connexion with this state of things that Rehoboam’s territory was invaded by Shishak, king of Egypt, for this Shishak was the king at whose court Jeroboam had met with a friendly reception when he fled from Jerusalem in the days of Solomon. Whatever was the cause of the invasion, the Egyptian army entered Jerusalem and plundered the temple and the royal palace.

¹ 1 Kings xv. 6, is omitted by the LXX., and seems a little out of place; but verses 6 and 7 taken together may mean that the state of things which existed under Rehoboam continued under Abijam.

We are not left to conjecture the cause of an invasion of Israel by the Syrians, which took place some years later, for we are expressly told that king “Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king’s house,” and sent them to Benhadad, king of Syria, to induce him to “break his league with Baasha” and invade Israel ; which Benhadad did.

Jehoshaphat.

(1 KINGS xxii. 1–36, 41–50 : 2 KINGS iii. 6–27.)

This unhappy warfare between Israel and Judah was brought to an end by Jehoshaphat. He “made peace with the king of Israel,” and joined him in an attempt to recover the territory which the Syrians had taken from Israel. The friendly relations which Jehoshaphat kept up between Judah and Israel, and the vigour with which he asserted his authority abroad, did much towards restoring the twelve tribes to their former position amongst the nations. In his time, we read, “there was no king in Edom ; a deputy was king,” which may mean either that he kept Edom in subjection to Judah, or that he reduced it again to subjection, after it had asserted its independence under his predecessors. Assisted by the subject king of Edom, he joined Jehoram the son of Ahab in a successful invasion of the territory of Moab, which had revolted from Israel. Nor was it only for success in war that he was distinguished. We are reminded of the peaceful glories of Solomon’s reign when we read that “Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold.” But the ships were wrecked at Ezion-Geber, the Edomite harbour at the head of the eastern tongue of the Red Sea, and the enterprise was given up.

Decline of Judah after the death of Jehoshaphat.

(2 KINGS viii. 20-22, 28, 29; xii. 17, 18.)

After the death of the powerful Jehoshaphat the prosperity of Judah experienced a rapid decline. The Edomites rebelled against his idolatrous son Jehoram, and succeeded in establishing their independence ; and at the same time Libnah, a city of Judah, " revolted," probably to the Philistines, near whose territory it lay. Jehoram's successor, Ahaziah, went with Joram, king of Israel, to war against Hazael, king of Syria ; but the only recorded result of the campaign was, that Joram returned wounded from the scene of hostilities.

In the later years of Joash, king of Judah, amongst the misfortunes that befel him after the death of his friend and counsellor Jehoiada, we find the Syrians campaigning in the south, taking Gath, a Philistine city which the Jews had occupied and fortified, and threatening Jerusalem. To buy them off, the temple and the palace treasures were again put in requisition.

Ahaz appeals to the Assyrians for aid against Syria and Israel.

(2 KINGS xvi. 1-9.)

Again, in the reign of Ahaz, Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, have marched together to the south, and have besieged Jerusalem ; but, failing to take it, have seized and occupied Elath, a seaport on the Red Sea which the Jews had held. This invasion drives Ahaz to appeal to the Assyrians for help. He sends an embassy to Nineveh, the inexhaustible temple treasures supplying the usual " present," and he promises

to be the “servant” of the king of Assyria if the latter will protect him from Syria and Israel. “And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him, for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.” It is clear, however, that the Assyrians thought more of extending their own dominions than of helping the Jews, for Elath was not restored, and Judah became subject to Assyria.

Assyria and Egypt.

The rapid advance of the Assyrians is now the most important fact in the foreign outlook of the kingdom of Judah. Already they have destroyed Damascus and put an end to the kingdom of Syria. In a few years Israel also will be carried into captivity, and then Assyria and Egypt will stand alone as the two powers with which the kingdom of Judah has any important concern. After a time the great Assyrian empire will be broken up, but that will make little difference to the Jews. The Babylonians or Chaldaeans, as they are also called, will step into power in the place of the Assyrians, and whether from Nineveh or from Babylon the waves of conquest will still roll on, until, like Syria and Israel, Judah too shall be engulfed. Egypt will not be able to save her. She shall hardly save herself. The waves will beat upon her own borders, if they do not actually run over them.

Invasion of Sennacherib.

(2 KINGS xviii. 7, 13-xix. 37.)

Apparently encouraged by some successes against the Philistines, and relying on the aid of Egypt, Hezekiah ventured to throw off the yoke of Assyria. But when his

country was invaded by Sennacherib, he sent in his submission to the Assyrian king, and agreed to pay a heavy fine. Nevertheless, either then or at a later time, a large detachment of the Assyrian army was sent against Jerusalem, while the main body was advancing along the sea coast in the direction of Egypt. From the walls of the city the Jews looked in dismay at the host which they could not meet in the field. The emissaries of the Assyrian offered to the Jews that if they would open their gates, and pay another fine, they should be left in peace in their own land until it might be convenient for their conquerors to carry them away, and settle them elsewhere, as they had done with the people of Syria and Israel. Covered with sackcloth, the king humbly prayed in the temple for the deliverance of his people. The answer to his prayers came through the prophet Isaiah. He, at least, was not afraid ; and when a deputation from the king waited upon him, he assured the nation that if they would but trust in God and stand firm, they should soon be delivered from the Assyrians. In accordance with his prediction, the siege of Jerusalem was unexpectedly raised, and the whole Assyrian army, having met with some sudden calamity, the exact nature of which is not told to us, retired to their own country.

The Battle of Megiddo.

(2 KINGS xxiii. 29, 30 : 2 CHRON. xxxv. 20-27.)

In the days of Josiah a different policy prevailed. He appears to have thrown in his lot with Assyria, and when Pharaoh Necho was marching to invade Asia, Josiah led out an army to oppose him. He was defeated and slain at the battle of Megiddo. Great was the grief and loud were the lamentations in Jerusalem when the body of the brave

and pious king was brought back to be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, and the very name of Megiddo long continued a word of sorrowful import to the Jews. On the death of Josiah, the Jews set up his son Jehoahaz as king. But after he had reigned three months he was deposed and put in bonds by the Egyptians, who placed his brother Jehoiakim upon the throne.

Egypt unable to save.

(2 KINGS xxiii. 36–xxiv. 7.)

The friendship of Egypt was of no avail to Jehoiakim. He was speedily subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. After three years' submission he rebelled, only to see Judah made the prey of “bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Children of Ammon,” whom the Lord “sent against Judah to destroy it.” The fact was, that Egypt was no longer able to protect him; “the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.” These words show to what extent the power of Egypt had previously advanced. It will help the reader to understand some passages in the history of this time, if he bears in mind that the sway of Egypt at one time reached to the Euphrates.¹ The important fortress of Carchemish on that river was held for some years by the Egyptians.²

The last Days.

(2 KINGS xxiv. 8–xxv. 26.)

There was nothing now to resist the might of Babylon. Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, called

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 33.

² 2 Chron. xxxv. 20: Jer. xlvi. 2.

also Jechoniah or Coniah,¹ who came to the throne on his father's death. Three months afterwards Jehoiachin was carried into captivity, and with him were carried "all the princes and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land." His uncle Zedekiah was placed upon the throne, only to provoke another invasion by another rebellion, for so "through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them off from his presence." Jerusalem was besieged for four months, and when the surrender of the city was inevitable, Zedekiah attempted to escape with the fighting men by stealing out at night; but being overtaken by the enemy, the soldiers were scattered and the king made prisoner. His sons were slain before his face. His own eyes were then put out, having been allowed to look their last upon that terrible spectacle; and, like his predecessor, he was sent in chains to Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem were thrown down, the temple and the principal buildings of the city were burnt, and the inhabitants were carried away, some to be put to death, the remainder into captivity. Even still a small remnant of the people was left in the land, and over these a governor was appointed. This governor was murdered by the leader of a rival faction; and then all the people "both small and great" "arose and came to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldees."

¹ 1 Chron. iii. 15: Jer. xxiv. 1, &c.: xxii. 24, &c.

CHAPTER IX.

INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

Religious Parties in Judah.

THE domestic history of the kingdom of Judah presents in one particular a remarkable contrast to that of the northern Kingdom. The rulers who succeeded Rehoboam were all of the line of David, and the sceptre for the most part passed down from hand to hand in undisturbed succession. But the people of Judah did not escape the religious troubles from which their brethren of the ten tribes suffered. In Judah, as in Israel, there were two parties—those who contended for the exclusive worship of Jehovah, and those who sympathized in a greater or less degree with the heathen religions of the surrounding nations, and encouraged, or at least tolerated, the practice of their idolatrous rites. The struggle between these two influences went on with varying results. Sometimes the one prevailed, sometimes the other; and the reign of each king is briefly characterized by the historian as good or bad, according to the side which he took in this all-important struggle.

The Bamoth, or High Places.

Many of the kings of Judah who are praised for putting down idolatry are blamed for allowing “the high places” to continue. Again and again we read that the king “did right in the sight of the Lord,” but “the high places were

not taken away," "the people did sacrifice, and burned incense on the high places."

The "high places," thus referred to, were centres of worship at different places throughout the country. Some of them appear to have been ancient sacred places of the earlier inhabitants of the land, the use of which, for religious purposes, was continued by the Hebrew conquerors, probably in conjunction with the Canaanites; though we also read of high places having been established in later times by the kings of Judah.¹

For a long time the worship at these shrines appears to have been allowed to go on without any objection being made to it, and it is not until the reign of Hezekiah that we hear of any decided effort being made to put it down. The law is distinct and emphatic in condemning it, and strictly enjoins that there should be one central place of worship for the whole people, at which alone sacrifices might be offered. The object of this injunction was, no doubt, in the first place, to preserve the unity of the national religion; but there is reason to believe that it was also intended to prevent the use of places of worship which had been associated with heathen rites, for it stands in close connexion with the command to destroy all the monuments of idolatry in the land, and with warnings against the seductions of false religions.²

When we are told of many of the kings that they put down idolatry, but that they allowed the high places to continue, we are probably to understand that the high places were left with the intention that they should be used for the worship of Jehovah alone: though it may also be implied, in the brief account of what took place on

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 11; xxviii. 25.

² Deut. xii. 1-7: Lev. xvii. 1-7.

these occasions, that the reformation which was effected in Jerusalem and its immediate neighbourhood did not always extend to the remoter parts of the country. In any case, the continued existence and use of these sanctuaries, which had been so long used for idolatrous purposes, would have been a constant invitation to restore the heathen rites; and we can easily understand how the complete destruction of them should have been required as a necessary part of any thorough-going reformation in the interests of the exclusive worship of Jehovah.

The first Reformation in Judah ; Asa and Jehoshaphat.

(1 KINGS xv. 9–24 ; xxii. 41–50.)

Both the use of the high places and the permission of idolatry, which were inherited from Solomon's time, were continued by Rehoboam and his successor Abijam. But it would appear that the toleration of heathen rites which Solomon introduced took a more unjustifiable form in his son's time, and that Rehoboam, whose mother was an Ammonitess, permitted the practice of abominations in Jerusalem which had not existed there before.¹

In the reign of Asa a reformation took place. The unholy rites were put down, the idols removed, and the king showed the reality of his zeal by deposing the queen mother, because “she had made an idol in a grove.”² The same policy was continued by his powerful successor

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 22–24.

² It is now generally agreed that the Hebrew word *Asherah*, which in this and corresponding passages is translated “grove,” really means an idol or upright figure, which appears to have been connected with the worship of the Phœnician goddess Ashtoreth. In the present instance the symbol seems to be used for the goddess which it represents. Translate “an idol unto Asherah.”

Jehoshaphat, who removed some remaining abominations which Asa had spared. “Nevertheless,” adds the historian, “the high places were not taken away” either by Asa or Jehoshaphat.

Relapse into Idolatry; Jehoram, Ahaziah, Queen Athaliah.

(2 KINGS viii. 16-29; ix. 27-29; x. 12-14; xi.)

Though Jehoshaphat was a decided opponent of idolatry in his own kingdom, he always kept on friendly terms with the people of Israel; and in an evil hour he allowed his son Jehoram to marry a daughter of the idolatrous king Ahab. The consequence was, that when Jehoram came to the throne “he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab,” and “he did evil in the sight of the Lord.” His son Ahaziah walked in the same steps, and in consequence met his end after a short reign of one year. When Jehu rose against the idolatrous house of Omri in Samaria, at the instigation of the prophet Elisha, Ahaziah was actually staying on a visit in the palace of the king of Israel, and was slain along with his host by the followers of Jehu. But though the king was killed, the benefits of the revolution did not yet extend to the kingdom of Judah. In the slaughter that followed the death of the two kings, forty-two of Ahaziah’s male relatives, who also happened to be in Israel, were put to death. When Athaliah the queen-mother, Jehoram’s widow, heard of their death, she planned the wholesale destruction of the remaining male representatives of the house of David, and seized the throne in the interest of the idolatrous party. She held possession of it for six years, and then the high priest Jehoiada had her deposed by a well-organized movement, and placed upon the throne

Ahaziah's son Joash. The wretched Athaliah was put to death by the people at the command of Jehoiada.

*The Second Reformation ; Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah,
Jotham.*

(2 KINGS xii. ; xiv. 1-4, 17-22 ; xv. 1-7, 32-38.)

Joash was the only representative of the late king who had escaped the cruel queen's massacre. He had been saved as an infant by his aunt, the wife of the high priest, and had been kept in concealment in the temple until the time came to make him king. When he began to reign he was a boy of seven, and the same influence which placed him on the throne directed the course of his reign : he "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, wherein Jehoiada the high priest instructed him." He restored the temple, which was in a state of ruin, and took away from the priests the management of the money which was contributed for the purpose of keeping the sacred edifice in order, because he found that they appropriated it to their own purposes. Still "the high places were not taken away": the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in them.

The approval of the reign of Joash in the Book of the Kings is expressly limited to the time wherein Jehoiada "instructed" him. In the Book of the Chronicles we read that after Jehoiada's death there was a reaction in favour of idolatry amongst the "princes of Judah," and that when Zechariah the son of Jehoiada stood up to protest against it, he was stoned to death by the king's command. The apostacy and ingratitude of the king are not related in the Books of Kings, but we are told of the misfortunes which gathered round the close of his reign. Judah was invaded

by the Syrians, who had to be bought off with the temple treasures. Joash was killed by some of his own officers who had conspired against him.

The next three kings, including Uzziah who reigned for fifty-two years, were all loyal to the worship of Jehovah. They “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,” only with the usual exception—that the high places were not removed.

Ahaz.

(2 KINGS xvi.)

Ahaz was a bad king, worse than any that preceded him. “He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire”—that is, caused him to be burnt alive as an offering to Moloch, the fire-god of the children of Ammon—“according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel,” and he “sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.”

Hezekiah ; the Third Reformation.

(2 KINGS xviii. 1-6.)

The excesses of Ahaz called for another reformation, which took place in the reign of his good son Hezekiah, and was more thorough than any that had preceded it. In Hezekiah we at last come to a king to whom praise is given without stint—“He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done.” “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” “He re-

moved the high places,” which none of his predecessors had done, “and brake the images, and cut down the groves.” He even “brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it, and he called it *Nehushtan*,” a piece of brass.

Manasseh.

(2 KINGS xxi. 1–22.)

The end of the struggle was yet far away. On the death of Hezekiah the returning wave of idolatry swept over the country again, and the flood was as extreme as the ebb had been. Manasseh the next king brought back all the evil that his father had banished. Altars were rebuilt, images set up again, and the cruel fires of Moloch flamed through the land as in the days of Ahaz. Though the historian seemed to have exhausted the power of his language in describing Ahaz, he has a worse account still to give of Manasseh. His idolatries surpassed anything that had yet been known. He caused the people of God “to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed from before the children of Israel”; and murder was added to idolatry—he “shed innocent blood very much till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another.”

Manasseh’s son Amon, who succeeded him, was a king of the same type as his father. He “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did.”

Josiah; the Fourth Reformation.

(2 KINGS xxii. ; xxiii. 1–28.)

After a reign of two years, Amon was slain by conspirators, and the reaction came in the days of his son

Josiah. Like an earlier reformer, Josiah was little more than a child—eight years old—when he was called to the throne; and the character of his administration was, no doubt, due in some degree to influences similar to those which guided the youth of Joash. He did not, however, commence his reforms until the eighteenth year of his reign, when he was twenty-six years of age—old enough to think and act for himself. The reformation, when it came, was very thorough, more so than any that had preceded it. The temple was first purified, and every vessel that had been defiled by use in any idolatrous rite was burnt. The “grove,” which Manasseh had again set up in the sacred edifice, was burnt, and “stamped to powder,” and the powder cast upon dead men’s graves. The houses of the shameless votaries of Ashtoreth were levelled with the ground. Throughout the land high places were torn down, altars were defiled, images broken, every vestige of idolatry was swept away, and the priests of Jehovah who had contaminated themselves with it were forbidden ever again to approach the altar of the Lord. Nor was the crusade against idolatry confined to Judah. It was carried, under the personal supervision of the king, into the country which had lately been occupied by the ten tribes. At Bethel, and throughout the cities of Samaria, the altars were defiled and thrown down, as they had been in Judah, and the priests who ministered at them were put to death. This account shows that there must have been some remnants of the Israelites still existing there, and that they acknowledged the authority of Josiah. The priests who were put to death in Samaria were probably not of the family of Levi, which fact would account for their being treated with less consideration than those who had offended in Judah. When idolatry was put down, Josiah kept the

passover—such a passover as had not been kept “from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah.”

The Book of the Law that was found in the Temple.

A story, to which we shall have occasion to refer again, is told in the Book of Kings of the occasion which led to Josiah’s reformation. The Temple had fallen into decay during the preceding reigns, and it was about to be restored. When the king sent his scribe to Hilkiah the high priest to sum the money that had been collected for the purpose, he was informed that Hilkiah had found in the Temple “the Book of the Law,” or “a book of the law”—the Hebrew words would bear either translation. The book was brought and read before the king, who was horrified to discover that the nation had been long ignoring the Divine precepts contained in this volume, and had by its neglect of them incurred the most dreadful penalties. A deputation was immediately sent to consult the prophetess Huldah, who announced that nothing could now avert the threatened doom from the nation, but that owing to the king’s repentance the evil would not come in his day. Nevertheless, the king summoned all the people to the Temple, and having read the entire book before them, bound himself and them in a solemn covenant to keep its provisions for the future.

The Struggle not ended.

The blood shed by Manasseh and the violent measures that accompanied Josiah’s reforms show the height to which party feeling had been raised by the long struggle, the course of which we have been following. As was to

have been expected, the victory won by such means was not permanent. On the death of Josiah the reaction came once again, and the heathen party appear to have continued in the ascendant until the end of the monarchy. The account that is given of the four remaining kings is very brief, but the side which they took in this controversy is sufficiently indicated by the sentence with which each one in succession is dismissed by the writer of the Books of the Kings—that “he did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

CHAPTER X.

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

THE historical summary which we have given of the regal period has been taken almost entirely from the Books of Samuel and Kings. There is, as we have already mentioned, another history of the same period contained in the Books of Chronicles, which follow the Books of the Kings in the English Bible.

The Genealogical Tables in the First Book of Chronicles.

The first ten chapters of the First Book of the Chronicles are taken up with a series of genealogical tables, beginning with that of the family of Adam. These tables contain a number of short historical and geographical notices scattered through them, many of which are of great interest and importance, as containing information which is not recorded elsewhere. These chapters are, in fact, a sort of skeleton of the Bible history down to the writer's time, and serve as a general introduction to the detailed history contained in the remainder of the work.

The Reigns of David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles.

The detailed history commences in the tenth chapter with an account of the death of Saul, and in the eleventh chapter takes up the history of David. The reigns of

David and Solomon are related at length, and the account of them which is contained in the Book of Kings is supplemented by some additional matter. But some remarkable incidents, which are recorded in the Books of Kings about these reigns, are not mentioned in the Chronicles. In more than one instance they seem to be not only omitted, but positively excluded by the course of the narrative.

The Kings of Judah in the Second Book of Chronicles.

After the death of Solomon, the narrative in the Books of Chronicles follows the line of the kings of Judah. The history of the northern kingdom is not related ; and the kings of Israel are only mentioned occasionally, when they happen to come in contact with the southern kingdom. The reigns of the successors of Solomon on the throne of Judah are treated, on the whole, more fully than in the Books of Kings, and some interesting particulars are added to the account of these times which is given in the preceding history. The important reign of Jehoshaphat, for instance, is treated at considerable length, and in the Chronicles we hear, for the first time, of this great king's plans for the religious education of the people of Judah, of the system of law-courts which he established, and of the success generally of his home administration, as well as some additional accounts of his foreign wars. We hear something, too, though still but little, of the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah, which, in the Books of Kings, was dismissed with the briefest notice. He sought God, we are told, in the days of Zechariah the prophet, " who had understanding in the visions of God "; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. He fortified Jerusalem, which was defended by engines "invented

by cunning men"; he improved the organization of the army, and was successful in foreign wars, extending the influence of Judah, even to the entering in of Egypt. But in his pride he attempted to usurp the functions of the priesthood. Having entered the Temple to burn incense, as he stood with the censer in his hand, he was confronted by a body of fourscore priests of the LORD, headed by Azariah the high priest, all "valiant men," who did not fear to withstand even kings in God's cause; and when his passion rose at this rebellious opposition, he was smitten with leprosy there and then, and continued a leper till the day of his death.

The news that Manasseh was carried captive to Babylon will be a surprise to the reader of the earlier history; and equally unexpected will be the story of his humbling himself and repenting in the land of his captivity, and of the religious reforms which he executed on his restoration to his native country. These are a few instances of the differences that will be found to exist between the two histories. The student who wishes to make a more complete comparison of them can easily do so by the aid of an ordinary reference Bible. We shall have to consider more fully in a later chapter the relation in which the Books of Chronicles stand to the Books of Samuel and Kings, and to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

IN the year 538 b.c., Babylon was taken by Cyrus, and the Persians stepped into the place of the Chaldaeans in relation to the Jews, as the Chaldaeans had themselves superseded the Assyrians. One of the first acts of the new ruler was to give to all the Jews throughout his dominions permission to return to their own country. Some of the captive people gladly accepted the favour. The return of the exiles, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the growth of the restored community under the protection of successive Persian kings, are the subjects of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. These two books form a continuation of the Books of Chronicles. A more detailed summary of their contents is given in the following sections.

The Return of the Jews to Jerusalem, and the Rebuilding of the Temple.

(EZRA i.-vi.)

Cyrus issues a decree that all the Jews who are willing to return to Jerusalem, and “build the house of the Lord God of Israel,” may do so, and that those who do not themselves wish to return may help their brethren with supplies and offerings for the work: Cyrus himself gives as his contribution the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple. About fifty thousand persons,

members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with priests and Levites, respond to the invitation, and set out for home. They re-occupy Jerusalem and commence to rebuild the Temple. But the work is hardly commenced when it is stopped again by the jealous opposition of their neighbours, who persuade the Persians that if the Jews are allowed to rebuild and fortify their city, they will revolt. The opposition is successful until the reign of the Persian king Darius, who gives the Jews the protection of a new decree, and the Temple is finished. The leaders of this first migration were Zerubbabel of the royal house of David, and Jeshua (or Joshua) the high priest. They were assisted in the work of rebuilding the Temple by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo.

Arrival of Ezra.

(EZRA vii.-x.)

A long time elapses, of which no account is given, until the reign of Artaxerxes, when the settlement is reinforced by a second migration, which arrives under the guidance of Ezra the scribe. Ezra is greatly distressed to discover that many of the Jews have contracted marriages with the surrounding heathen. He binds all the offenders under a solemn oath to put away the idolatrous wives and their children, and the Book of Ezra ends with an interesting account of the carrying out of this reform.

Nehemiah.

(NEHEMIAH i.-vii.)

The next arrival on the scene is Nehemiah. He was cupbearer to that same Artaxerxes who had already allowed Ezra to come to the assistance of his brethren;

and finding favour with his royal master, he obtained authority to come to Jerusalem, and build the walls of the city, which were still in ruins.

In carrying out this task, Nehemiah has to contend against the angry opposition of many enemies; but he urges on the work with vigour. The masons and their labourers have to build and carry materials with their swords by their sides. Along the rising walls are stationed guards and sentinels, while a trumpeter stands by Nehemiah ready to sound the alarm. So they labour and watch day after day “from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.” At night everyone is compelled to come within the walls for mutual protection, and the guard is kept up. Nehemiah himself is ever on the watch. While the work goes on, neither he nor his immediate friends and attendants put off their clothes. In fifty-two days the walls are finished, and the city safe.

Hard work and open enemies outside were not all that Nehemiah had to contend with. The state of siege in which they had been living had reduced the poorer Jews to the greatest extremities, and their hardships had been increased by the selfishness of the rich, who had lent them money on usury, taking their possessions in pledge, and when all else failed taking their children as slaves. “A great ery” was raised by the suffering people, complaining of the cruelty of their brethren, and demanding a distribution of corn. Nehemiah was able to persuade the money-lenders to restore the pledges, and to deal with their poorer brethren in a more liberal and patriotic spirit. Another serious danger was caused by the existence within the walls of the city of a disloyal party amongst the nobles, who kept up a secret correspondence with the enemies outside. This state of things caused Nehemiah

the greatest anxiety in the unprotected state of the city, for though the walls had been built, the city was as yet but partially inhabited, and the large unoccupied spaces left it perilously open to surprise. He, therefore, gave anxious charge to his brother Hanani, "a faithful man," to keep a careful watch over the city, and especially to see that the gates were shut and securely fastened every evening, before the day guards were relieved by the sentinels for the night, and that they were not opened again before broad daylight in the morning.

Public Reading of the Law.

(NEHEMIAH viii.—x.)

Although Ezra's name has not been mentioned in the earlier part of the Book of Nehemiah he is still at Jerusalem, and he now appears as the leading figure in a great public reading of "the law," which lasts for seven days, and is accompanied by public rejoicings and thanksgiving. At the same time the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated. After the Festival a solemn fast was proclaimed, and the whole people having confessed and bewailed their offences, deliberately renewed their covenant with the God of their fathers: an oath was administered that they would keep the law, avoid intermarriages with strangers, neither buy nor sell on the Sabbath, observe the Sabbatical year, and remit all debts according to the law, pay a tax of a third of a shekel for the service of the Temple, and offer all first-fruits and all tithes to the Levites. Ezra is supposed to have died soon after these services, for his name is not mentioned again.

Conclusion of the Book; Nehemiah's Second Visit.

(NEHEMIAH xi.-xiii.)

The remaining contents of the Book of Nehemiah are the selection of a tenth part of the whole people to dwell within the walls of the city, the solemn dedication of the walls, and a second visit of Nehemiah, who had gone back to his duties at the Persian Court. On his return to Jerusalem he had again to correct abuses which had revived to a considerable extent during his absence, in spite of the public resolutions and vows to the contrary.

*“The Adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” Samaritans,
Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites.*

In Ezra and Nehemiah we read that the efforts of the Jews to rebuild the Temple and the walls of their city were persistently opposed by the Samaritans. These people are described as a mixed multitude of foreigners, whom the Assyrian conqueror had planted in the territory of the ten tribes, when he took the Israelites away; and who had adopted the religion of Israel along with their own multifarious idolatries. We must remember that this is the Jewish representation of them, and that we have already seen reason to think that there was some proportion, greater or less, of the descendants of Jacob amongst the people who dwelt in the territory of the ten tribes, as it is hardly likely that King Josiah would have attempted a religious reformation amongst them, if they were purely heathen.¹ The expression, “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” which is used of them, would seem to point to the same conclusion. When Zerubbabel’s band of immi-

¹ See p. 88.

grants first arrived in Jerusalem, and began to build the Temple, these people, whoever they were, asked to be allowed to join in the work. This the Jews refused, and the refusal converted the Samaritans into the bitter opponents of the undertaking, in which they had been anxious to have a share. Though it may seem a matter for regret that an opportunity was thus thrown away of enlisting supporters in the cause of the Lord, it is also possible that the preservation of the Jewish faith was involved in the rejection of the proffered assistance, for the Jewish element in the alliance might not have been strong enough to resist the idolatrous influences with which it would have been brought into contact by the proposed union.

We know from the New Testament that the enmity between the Jews and Samaritans continued till a later age. But it is only by reading the history of the intervening centuries that we can understand how the bitterness of this feeling was exasperated by a long series of events. Over and over again during this period did the Samaritans act the same two parts which they acted on the occasion of the rebuilding of the Temple. When the Jews were prosperous, or when any advantage seemed likely to result from an alliance with them, the Samaritans were ready to claim relationship with them; but more frequently we find Jews and Samaritans engaged in bitter hostilities. When Alexander the Great visited the Temple on Mount Sion, and granted the Jews special privileges in respect of their religion, the Samaritans, “with great alacrity,” invited the royal conqueror to visit their temple on Mount Gerizim, claiming to be Hebrews, and expecting to be treated with the same favour as their neighbours had been; but when one of the successors of Alexander was endeavouring to extirpate the worship of Jehovah, and

the Jews in Palestine were fighting for their very existence under Judas Maccabæus, a Samaritan host joined their heathen enemies. On one occasion a band of pilgrims who were going from Galilee to the Temple at Jerusalem were attacked, as they passed through Samaria, and numbers of them slain ; and in later times it was customary for many of those who went up from Galilee to attend the Festivals at Jerusalem, to travel by the longer route on the east of the Jordan. Two stories related by Josephus, whether they are true or false, will show the kind of feeling that existed between the two neighbouring communities. He says that some Samaritans succeeded in gaining access to the Temple at Jerusalem, and desecrated the sacred building by scattering dead men's bones upon the pavement. He also relates that, when the people of Sion were accustomed to communicate to their brethren in Babylon the time of the rising of the paschal moon by means of a series of beacon fires, the Samaritans used to light fires upon their mountains to mislead the watchmen.

One of "the adversaries," "Sanballat the Horonite," was a Moabite of the city of Horonaim, who held office under the Persians in Samaria.¹ Other opponents, who are mentioned by name, are "Tobiah, the slave, the Ammonite," and "Geshem," or Gashmu, "the Arabian." Tobiah, who is called a slave perhaps in contemptuous allusion to the meanness of his origin, was governor of the country of the Ammonites to the east of the Jordan, holding this appointment, like Sanballat, from the Persians. Geshem "the Arabian" held a similar appointment in the Edomite district to the south of Judæa. The hostility between the Jews and the three races here mentioned, the

¹ Neh. ii. 19.

Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, was a thing of long standing, and, as in the case of the Samaritans, continued for centuries after the time of which we are now reading.¹

The Lost Tribes.

According to the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people who returned to Jerusalem after the Captivity were only members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with some Levites and their servants. They were the representatives of the people of the Southern Kingdom. There is no mention in these books of the population that had been carried into captivity from the Northern Kingdom. It may have been this fact that gave rise to the idea that the ten tribes have been lost. The prophets had foretold that they, as well as the tribes of Judah and of Benjamin, should be restored again to their own land.² But there was no record of any such restoration having taken place. On the contrary, according to the representation of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the occupants of their ancient territory were the descendants of the heathen who had been planted in their place. What had become of them? According to Josephus, they were in his time still living in countless hosts beyond the Euphrates.³ That they would yet return to their own land, when the times of the Messiah had come, was the dream of another writer.⁴ But they have not returned, nor are they to be found in the East. In the ninth century after Christ, a learned Jew, Eldad, himself of the tribe of Dan,

¹ Gen. xix. 30–38; xxvii.: Numb. xx. 14–21: Deut. xxiii. 3–6.: Pss. lx. 8, 9; exxxvii.; Neh. xiii. 1, 2; 1 Macc. v. 1–7. But see also Deut. ii. 1–8, 9, 19; xxiii. 7, 8.

² Is. xi.: Zech. x. 8–11: Micah vii. 14: Jer. iii. 12–19; xxxi.: Ezek. vi., xxxvii.

³ Ant. xi. 5, 2.

⁴ 2 Esdras xiii.

took a journey in search of the ten tribes, but without success. Other Jewish travellers of the later middle ages were on the look out for them. The inquiry has been taken up by Christian writers, and even in the present day continues to interest a considerable number of persons. Since the lost tribes are not to be found beyond the Euphrates, or anywhere in the world bearing their own ancient name, their representatives have been sought amongst other races. Attempts have been made to discover them in the Afghans, in the Chinese Jews, in the Parthians and Buddhists, and, when speculation on the subject began to run wild, anywhere at all where any real or fancied resemblance of feature or character, or religious tradition, could be adduced in favour of the alleged identification, from the North American Indians to the British people. Equally worthy of credit with these modern speculations, and much more beautiful, is the ancient Jewish legend, preserved in the apocryphal Book of Second Esdras,¹ that the captive people “ took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land,” and that they are still waiting there in the unknown country, until the time when “ the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again,” and bring them back once more to their old home :—

—“A legend wild—

How the Ten Tribes, the banish'd of the Lord
 Took counsel with themselves, that they would leave
 The multitude of heathens, and fare forth
 To a far country, where there never came
 Oarsman or sail. A penitential host,
 They entered the Euphrates by the ford.

¹ 2 Esdras xiii. 40–47.

And often hath the moon at midnight hung
 Pillars of luminous silver o'er the wave,
 But not a pillar half so broad and bright
 As that which steered them on, while the Most High
 Held still the flood. And aye their way they took
 Twice nine long months, until they reach'd the land
 Arsareth. There the mountains gird them in—
 And o'er the gleaming granite pass white clouds,
 That sail from awful waterfalls, and catch,
 And tear their silvery fleeces on the pines.
 And never hunter scaled those granite peaks,
 And never wandering man hath heard the roar
 Of cataracts soften'd through those folds of fir.
 But a great temple hangs upon the hills,
 And ever and anon rolls through its gates
 A mighty music washing through the pines,
 And silver trumps still snarl at the new moon ;
 And all their life is sacrament and psalm,
 Vesper or festival, and holy deed.
 There do they dwell until the latter time,
 When God Most High shall stay the springs again.”¹

Returning from the region of poetry to sober prose, if we ask what really became of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel, after they were carried away from their own land, we shall, perhaps, be guided to the correct answer by a number of scattered hints. There is reason to believe that many of the Israelites, as well as of the people of Judah, lapsed into the heathenism that surrounded them in the land of their captivity, and also in the many other lands to which, even at that early period, they were carried by their flight from persecution, or by their zeal for commercial pursuits.² It is also very likely that under the same government which allowed the

¹ Bishop Alexander: “*The Waters of Babylon.*”

² 1s. xi. 12; lvii.; lxv.: Jer. x.; xxvi. 21; xxxi. 10; xliv.: Ezek. v. 2, 10, 12; xiv. 3 sq.: Jonah i. 3: Deut. xxviii. 64.

southern tribes to return and rebuild Jerusalem, many of the other exiles also found their way back to their old settlements. Some of them, perhaps, came to Jerusalem and Judah. It is certain that in later times we find a population in Galilee, and in the country to the east of the Jordan, keeping up their connexion with the Jewish Temple, and recognized by the people of Jerusalem as belonging to the Jewish community. And one name, at least, mentioned in the New Testament, that of Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher,¹ shows that there was nothing to forbid persons belonging to the other tribes residing in Jerusalem along with Judah and Benjamin. The name of “Jew,” originally confined to the people of the Southern Kingdom, and derived from the tribe of Judah, now became the common title of all the nation, wherever settled. We may conclude, therefore, that the foreign “Jewish” communities,² some of which were very numerous indeed, included members from all the tribes. The address of one of the Epistles in the New Testament “to the Twelve tribes of the dispersion” confirms this supposition.³ In the Book of the Acts, too, the whole community of those who held the faith of Israel is spoken of as “our twelve tribes.”⁴

Esther.

The Book of Esther is a tale of a Jewish maiden, one of “the children of the captivity,” who was chosen for her beauty to be the royal consort of the Persian king Ahasuerus. Wicked Haman, the prime minister, had a spite against her foster-father Mordecai, and obtained a decree from the king, that on a certain day all the Jews through-

¹ Luke ii. 36, 37. ² Acts ii. 5–11. ³ James i. 1. ⁴ Acts xxvi. 7.

out his vast dominions should be given up to slaughter. On the thirteenth of the month Adar all are to be destroyed, "both young and old, little children and women," and their enemies are to take their spoil. But through Esther's influence with the king the cruel plot is countermined. Haman is exposed in his true character, and so completely are the tables turned against him that he is himself hanged upon the gallows fifty cubits high, which he had prepared for the hated Mordecai. Mordecai now becomes prime minister in Haman's place, and in his new position is able to befriend his countrymen. Assisted by Esther, he obtains the reversal of the decree which had been passed against them. In place of it a new decree is issued, giving permission to the Jews "to stand for their lives" and take vengeance on their enemies. The decree is addressed to all persons in authority through the king's dominions, and is despatched by couriers to the "one hundred and twenty-seven provinces," "from India to Ethiopia." On the stated day, the thirteenth of the month Adar, a tremendous slaughter of the enemies of the Jews takes place. Seventy-five thousand are massacred. But the Jews lay not a hand upon the spoil. In the palace of Shushan alone, where the Jews were allowed a second day at the dreadful work, eight hundred are killed, amongst whom are the ten sons of Haman. In memory of this great deliverance an annual festival is instituted. Two days are kept as "days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." The two days of the feast are the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar, those being the days upon which "the Jews rested from their enemies." In the provinces they rested on the fourteenth after the one day's slaughter, and in Shushan, where they were allowed

a second day's slaughter, they rested on the fifteenth. The festival which is kept on these days is the Feast of Purim. The writer of the Book of Esther tells us that the name "Purim" is the plural of *Pur*, a lot, which is probably a Persian word; and that the feast was so called because Haman cast lots to determine a favourable day for the massacre of the Jews.

The Book of Esther and the Canon.

The admission of the Book of Esther into the Canon shows that all the Jews, both those who remained scattered abroad amongst the heathen, as well as those who had elected to return to Jerusalem, were recognized as belonging to the Jewish Church. The book makes no mention of Judah or Jerusalem ; it only speaks of the children of the Captivity. It does not however throw any light upon the question about the lost tribes, for Esther and Mordecai are described as belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and the scattered people are spoken of as "Jews," a name which might, or might not, include all the exiles.

The Feast of Purim.

The Feast of Purim is still kept by the Jews on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar. It has come to be considered a sort of preliminary festival to the Passover, which is held exactly a month later,¹ and it has been called the Passover of the Dispersion. Part of the ceremonial at the Feast is the solemn reading of the Book of Esther, and it was long the custom, whenever the hated name of Haman was mentioned by the reader, for the

¹ Lev. xxiii. 5, 6, &c.

whole congregation to hiss and stamp, and shake their clenched fists and say, "Let his name be blotted out," "Let the name of the wicked perish." The boys who were present at the same time rubbed out the name which they had written for the purpose upon pieces of wood or stone, making a great clatter with their hands, or by knocking the pieces of wood or stone together. At the conclusion of the reading the whole congregation exclaimed "Cursed be Haman, blessed be Mordecai; cursed be Zeresh (the wife of Haman), blessed be Esther; cursed be all idolaters, blessed be all Israelites; and blessed be Harbonah, who hanged Haman." The passage from the Book of Exodus which relates the destruction of the Amalekites, the people of Agag the supposed ancestor of Haman, is also read.¹

The idea which the Book of Esther gives of the persecutions to which the scattered Jews were liable even in those early ages, and the spirit in which it shows those persecutions to have been met, make the book read like an epitome of much of the history of the dispersion from that time to this. Even in our own day we have witnessed a remarkable instance of the persecutions which have so long followed the ancient people; and the modern observances in connexion with the Feast of Purim show the late survival of the spirit generated by the fortunes of the Jews and the treatment which they have received from other races. The persistence with which these features in the history of the Jews have continued to manifest themselves is one of the most remarkable facts in history.

¹ Ex. xvii. 8-16 : 1 Sam. xv. 8 : Esther iii. 1.

CHAPTER XII.

COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

Biblical Criticism.

THE object of the preceding chapters has been merely to give such a general idea of the contents of the Historical Books, and of the course of the narrative which they contain, as may be found a useful guide to those readers of the Bible who are not already familiar with this portion of it. Nothing has been said of the date, or authorship, or historical value of these writings. On these subjects we propose to say a little in this and the two following chapters.

Unfortunately the Hebrew Historical Books are anonymous. Unlike most other historical works with which we are acquainted, they do not give the names of their authors,¹ or say when they were written. There are, no doubt, many Jewish traditions relating to the authorship and composition of the Books of the Bible; but many of these traditions are so obviously untrustworthy, that we can place little reliance upon those which are not actually disproved, and are compelled to be very cautious in making any use of them for the purpose of historical investigation. In recent times some scholars have devoted much attention to the careful examination of the contents of the Books of

¹ Unless the Book of Nehemiah be an exception. But see the section on the sources of the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, in chap. XIV.

the Bible, in order to ascertain whether anything can be learned from the writings themselves as to their origin and character. This branch of the study of the Bible is called Biblical Criticism. In the following sections we shall give some of the results of Biblical Criticism which affect the Historical Books. We can only give results, though we may in some cases indicate the lines of argument by which the critics have arrived at their conclusions.

*The Historical Books contain Quotations and Extracts
from earlier Compositions.*

One of the first results of Biblical Criticism was the discovery that, whatever may have been the date of the composition of the Historical Books, they contain in their present text fragments of earlier compositions from which they have been, to a greater or less extent, compiled. In a few cases the Biblical writers mention the earlier sources from which these extracts are taken. "The Book of the Wars of the Lord" is quoted in Numbers.¹ The Book of Jasher, which was perhaps a collection of warlike poems, is also twice mentioned, once in Joshua, and again in the Second Book of Samuel.² But there are also many places in which, though nothing is said to show that a quotation is intended, the earlier pieces can be unmistakeably discerned lying embedded in the present text. The two narratives of the Creation, for instance, which stand at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, are evidently the work of different hands, and are, no doubt, earlier compositions which were used by a later compiler. The sections into which the chapters of the Book of Genesis immediately following these narratives naturally divide themselves also

¹ Numb. xxi. 14.

² Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam i. 18.

show signs of diverse origin ; and a close inspection of the story of the Flood will show that its puzzling complications and contradictions can be most easily explained on the supposition that it has been made up of at least two stories woven together. The interesting account of the invasion of Canaan by the kings of the East, which now stands as the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, is a piece which is recognized by general consent as exhibiting signs of a very early date in comparison with its present surroundings. Attention has already been called to the frequent repetitions in the history of the patriarchs, which evidently arise from the manner in which the Book of Genesis has been composed ; and also to the fragmentary character of the sections in which the Mosaic legislation and the narrative of the Mosaic period are given. The catalogue of the stations occupied by the Israelites during their desert wanderings, given in Numbers xxxiii., may be particularly mentioned as an acknowledged piece of earlier date, and should be compared with the little fragment relating to the same subject which has been introduced into Deuteronomy x.¹ The poetical song of Moses in Exodus xv., the other song in Deuteronomy xxxii., and "the Blessing" of Moses, which follows it, are further examples of the use of earlier materials.

In the later books the same peculiarity is to be noticed, though not to the same extent or with the same distinctness as in the Pentateuch. Instances are however to be found, about which no reasonable doubt can be entertained. One has already been quoted from the Book of Joshua. The Book of Judges has the appearance of having been compiled from a number of separate traditions relating to the different tribes, which have been put together in their

¹ Deut. x. 6, 7.

present framework by a later hand. In the First Book of Samuel the history of David's youth "reads," to quote from the late Dean Milman, "much like a collection of traditions, unharmonized, and taken from earlier lives or from poems in his praise."¹

The composite Character of the Book of Genesis exemplified in the case of the Narrative of the Flood.

The following attempt to separate the component parts of the Flood narrative will illustrate what has been said in the preceding paragraph of the manner in which the Historical Books are supposed to have been composed; and will make it clear that, in this narrative at least, there are unmistakeable traces of two original stories. In the extracts which are placed to the left hand the name for the Divine Being is "LORD"; in those on the right hand the word used is "God." In the left hand column, again, the Flood begins after seven days' notice, and continues for forty days, and then abates during two² periods of seven days each; while in the other column Noah continues in the ark for 370 days, and the time is marked in quite a different way from that in which it is marked in the fragments on the left hand, namely, by months of thirty days each, twelve months making the year. The chronology of each story is thus simple and consistent with itself, while the result produced by interweaving the two is complicated and confusing.³ Once more, according to the extracts on the left hand, Noah takes into the ark seven

¹ Milman: *Jewish Hist.*, Book vii., Note c.

² Or, three. See Gen. viii. 10.

³ The difficulty which the compiler experienced in putting his materials together will be further evident from a comparison of ch. viii. 5 with v. 9 in the same chapter.

pairs of all the clean beasts ; and this is quite consistent with the account of his sacrifice on leaving the ark, which belongs to the same story. In the other story, according to which only one pair of each kind is preserved from the flood, the renewal of the covenant, when Noah leaves the ark, is marked by the sign of the rainbow, and there is no mention of a sacrifice. These are some of the reasons which have led to the conclusion that the present text contains fragments of at least two stories. At the same time, it must be admitted that the attempt to extract these two stories in their entirety out of the present text is not quite successful. The verses given in the right-hand column form a complete whole in themselves, but in the left-hand column there are both deficiencies and redundancies. It is possible that the compiler may have added or left out some things in order to harmonize his narrative. The division of the text is in some places conjectural ; and it may be, and has been, made in other ways than that in which we make it here.

(GEN. vi. 5-8.)

5 And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth ; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

(GEN. vi. 9-22.)

9 These are the generations of Noah : Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt ; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this *is the fashion* which thou shalt make it *of*: &c. [To end of v. 16.]

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven: *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every *sort* shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep *them* alive with thee: they shall be male and female.

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every *sort* shall come unto thee, to keep *them* alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

(GEN. vii. 1-5.)

AND the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that *are not* clean by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

(GEN. vii. 10, 12, 16*b*, 17, 18*b*–20*a*,
22, 23*a*.)

(GEN. vii. 6–9, 11, 13–16*a*, 18*a*,
20*b*, 21.)

6 And Noah *was* six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that *are* not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

(12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.)

(16*b* And the Lord shut him in.)

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

18*b* And the ark went upon the face of the waters.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark :

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth ; and all the high hills that *were* under the whole heaven were covered.

20a Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail.

22 All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of life, of all that *was* in the dry *land*, died.

23a And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven ; and they were destroyed from the earth.

(GEN. viii. 6–12, 13b.)

6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made :

7 And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from the earth.

8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground ;

9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth : then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

10 And he stayed yet other seven days ; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark ;

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him.

18a And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth.

20b And the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man.

(GEN. vii. 23b–viii. 5, 13a–19.)

23b And Noah only remained *alive*, and they that were with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. AND God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark : and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged ;

2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained ;

3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually : and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

12 And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

13b And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that *is* with thee, of all flesh, *both* of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

(GEN. viii. 20-22.)

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I

5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

13a And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

(GEN. ix. 1-17.)

AND God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, &c., [to end of v. 7].

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, &c. [to end of v. 17.]

Elohistic and Jehovistic Elements in the Old Testament; Reconstructive Theories; Names of the Divine Being.

We have mentioned that the two sets of selections, which we have just given from the narrative of the Flood, are distinguished from each other by the use of different names for the Divine Being. In the one case the name ELOHIM, translated in the English by "God," is used; in the other, the word used is JEHOVAH, translated by "LORD."¹ The same distinctive use of these two names characterizes parallel passages in other parts of the Penta-

¹ In Gen. vi. 5 we have altered the translation from "God" to "the Lord," to correspond with the original.

teuch, and is also to be noticed elsewhere. This fact has given rise to the theory that there were two writers or sets of writers, whose labours contributed in different ways to the formation of the Historical Books, as they now exist ; and that the work of each may still be recognized by the preference which it displays for the use of the name Jehovah or Elohim, as well as by other marks. Some scholars have supposed that they have been able, by the aid of these indications, to discern in the historical books the earlier forms of composition, from which the later works came ; and even to distinguish the contributions of many subsequent revisers and editors, by whom the work was gradually brought to its present shape. It is impossible here to give the particulars of the different theories on this subject, which have been worked out with great elaboration and much diversity of detail. The reader who wishes for fuller information about them must consult some larger treatise than this. On one point, however, there is a pretty general agreement amongst the scholars of whom we are now speaking. By putting together a number of Elohistic passages in the Book of Genesis, a narrative can be formed which presents an appearance of completeness in itself ;¹ and it is supposed

¹ An examination of the following portions of the Book of Genesis will show that they are distinguished by certain common characteristics, and that they form a continuous narrative :—The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (i. 1–ii. 3) ; The Generations of Adam (v. 1–32) ; The Generations of Noah (vi. 9–22, and the other Elohistic portions of the Flood narrative, including ix. 28, 29) ; The Generations of Shem (xi. 10–26) ; The Generations of Ishmael (xxv. 12–17) ; The Generations of Esau (xxxvi. 1–8) ; The Generations of Esau, in Mount Seir (xxxvi. 9–13). Other fragments which bear the same characteristics may also be recognized ; but in the longer biographies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, they are more broken up and mixed with other matter, as in the Flood narrative (*see* xi. 27 ; xxv. 19 ; xxxvii. 2).

that this Elohistic narrative represents an early connected history, from which the later forms of the book were derived, additions or alterations having been made by subsequent writers, or sections from other works having been incorporated in the text. The same foundation document can also be traced later on; but its connected character is gradually lost, and its identification becomes more purely a matter of conjecture.

A passage in the Book of Exodus,¹ which appears to say that the name Jehovah was of later origin among the Hebrews than another title for the Divine Being, has been supposed to favour the idea that the earliest written document was Elohistic, and that the Jehovistic passages are, generally speaking, later.

Much has been written, and much difference of opinion has been expressed, as to the exact meanings of the two words **ELOHIM** and **JEHOVAH**. It would appear that the former is the more general term. It is used of the gods of the heathen, as well as of the God of the Jews. The name **ЈЕНОВАН** (or **ЈАХВЕН**, as it is, perhaps, to be pronounced) is used only of the God of the Hebrews. Besides the two names **ELOHIM** and **JEHOVAH**, which are of most common occurrence, and which, in the English version, are represented respectively by the words "God" and "Lord," the latter printed in small capitals, there are other names for the Supreme Being, which are more rarely used: **EL**, which is also translated "God"; **АДОНAI**, "Lord"; **EL SHADDAI**, "The Almighty God"; and **EL ELYON**, "The Most High God." These names occur so rarely that we cannot attempt any generalization as to the use of them. Sometimes two or more of them are used in

¹ Ex. vi. 3.

conjunction. In one long section the combination Jehovah Elohim is regularly used.¹

The Documentary Hypothesis explains Difficulties.

Though we may not be prepared at present to accept the reconstructive theories of the critics, and may have to wait a long time yet before we can say for certain what permanent results will follow from their labours in this direction, there are some important conclusions which follow from the discovery that the Historical Books contain fragments of earlier compositions. This discovery affords the obvious solution of many difficulties, which have long puzzled careful readers of the Bible. Anyone who is accustomed to the use of the ordinary Biblical commentaries may remember many forced and unnatural interpretations of the text, which have been proposed for the purpose of reconciling contradictory or otherwise inconsistent passages in the Historical Books.² The true explanation of many of the inconsistencies between different parts of these books is evidently to be found in the fact that the irreconcilable passages are extracts from independent earlier writings. We do not mean by this that the later writers did not aim at presenting the entire history as a harmonious whole. On the contrary, a careful study of their work—of the Flood narrative, for instance, or of the history of the life and times of Abraham, will show that the greatest care was taken, and much skill exercised, in the endeavour to construct a consecutive narrative out of the different traditions or other materials with which

¹ Gen. ii. 4–iii. 24.

² Compare, for instance, the order of Creation in Gen. i. 20–28, with that in ch. ii. 18–25; Gen. viii. 5, with v. 9; Gen. xxvi. 34, and xxviii. 9, with ch. xxxvi. 2, 3; Gen. xxxii. 3, and xxxiii. 16, with xxxvi. 6–8.

the compilers had to deal. It affords a striking proof of the respect with which the earlier reminiscences were treated by the literary workmen of later times, that they preferred to allow these pieces to stand exactly as they found them rather than to make alterations in them, even in cases where the inconsistencies between the component parts manifestly interfered with the success of their efforts to harmonize the whole.

Further Consequences of accepting the Documentary Theory.

There is another consequence which follows from our conclusions as to the manner in which the Historical Books were composed. Where we find the present narrative to have been compiled from earlier compositions, and can see—as we sometimes can—that the order and arrangement of the history are produced by the endeavour of the later writer to make a connected story out of the earlier records, there the materials out of which the story is constructed will have a more real historical value for us than the form which the later writer gave to the whole. Thus, to take one of the examples already quoted of the composite character of the Book of Genesis, there can be no doubt that we have in that book a collection of genuine traditions relating to the times of Abraham and his immediate descendants. But it is equally clear to the careful student of the book that its narrative has been artificially constructed out of these traditions, and that some of its parts do not fit well into their present places. The historical value of this portion of the Book of Genesis, therefore, consists in the general ideas which it gives us of the course of events, and in its pictures of life; not in the detailed succession of events, or in the minutiae of its

chronology. That the forefathers of the Hebrew race migrated from the East through the land of Canaan, and from Canaan passed on to Egypt, are facts of history that no reasonable person would doubt. It would be quite another thing to maintain that their wanderings from place to place followed the exact course given in the Book of Genesis.

It will further follow, as a consequence of accepting the documentary theory, that the question of the date of the composition of the Pentateuch, which has been so eagerly debated, will lose much of its importance as bearing upon the further question of the credibility of the early history; for it is agreed on all hands that, whether the Pentateuch was composed in the time of the Second Temple, or, as some think, was only re-edited then, having been composed long before, it unquestionably contains records which were committed to writing in a much earlier age. The exact date of the writing of these earlier records is, however, still unfortunately an open question. There is no decisive external testimony on the subject; and it can only be decided approximately, if it can be decided at all, from the internal evidence of the records themselves. These remarks apply only to the historical narrative of the Pentateuch. We shall presently see that there is a question as to the date of some of the laws, which would be at once settled against those who maintain that they belong to the time of the Second Temple, if it could be shown that the Pentateuch was completed before the Babylonian Captivity.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARACTER OF THE EARLIER HISTORY.

The Traditions in the Book of Genesis relating to the early History of Mankind came to Palestine from the East.

MOST of the ideas relating to the early history of mankind, which are contained in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, are also to be met with elsewhere, in more or less modified forms. In the Classical Mythology, and in the religious traditions of other nations, we find stories of the manner of the creation of the world, of the decline of mankind from a primitive state of happiness, of the giants that were once upon the earth, of the destruction by a flood of all mankind except a chosen few, of the origin of the rainbow, of the impious attempts of man to reach the dwellings of the gods, and so on. No doubt the wide dissemination of these common ideas is in most cases to be accounted for by the existence of a primæval tradition amongst the parent people, before the separation of the races amongst whose members these ideas are now to be found. In some cases, however, these thoughts may have passed from one people to another in later times, and it is even possible that similar stories may have originated independently in different places. In the case of the Hebrew traditions relating to the Creation of the World and the early history of mankind, we are not left entirely dependent upon conjecture as to the source from which they were derived, for we

have clear evidence connecting some of them with the region and people from which the Book of Genesis traces the descent of the Hebrews themselves. One of the most interesting results of the decyphering of the cuneiform, or arrow-headed characters, in which the monumental and other inscriptions of Assyria and Babylon are written, has been the discovery of Chaldaean legends of the creation of the world, and of the drowning of mankind by a flood, which exhibit some striking resemblances to the narratives in Genesis.¹ Proofs have also been discovered in these inscriptions of the existence of the institution of a seventh day's rest.

The materials from which those early chapters of the Book of Genesis were composed may, therefore, have been traditions brought from the East by the forefathers of the Hebrew race, and preserved independently by them and their descendants, until they received their present place in the Hebrew Bible. But we cannot exclude the possibility that the verbal and other resemblances between the two traditions may be due, in some degree, to later communications between the Jews and their ancient home.

Origin and Significance of these Traditions.

When we ask how these traditions first came into existence, and what is their meaning and historical significance, we approach more difficult questions, which have

¹ It is remarkable that the tablets in the British Museum contain fragments of three or four different legends of the Flood, showing that there were several variations of this story, and thus in some degree confirming the results of the critical examination of the narrative in Genesis. See an interesting article on the Flood Tablets in *The Nineteenth Century* for January, 1882, by Professor C. H. H. Wright.

much exercised the minds of scholars. Some of them may have been due to a primitive form of philosophical speculation. It is hard to conceive what other origin there could have been for the story of the creation of the world and its inhabitants in six days; unless, indeed, we are to suppose that the story was not originally intended as a narrative of actual facts, but as some kind of parable or allegory with another meaning than that which appears on the surface. It would seem, however, that the compiler of the Book of Genesis intended the accounts of the Creation and of the Fall to be regarded as narratives of facts, when he placed them at the beginning of his work, without giving any hint that they were not to be interpreted in the same way as the other portions of the book.

The idea of the Fall might have been suggested by an attempt to explain the contradiction which we feel in life between the lofty aims and aspirations of man and his disappointing failures and hampered condition. But the story of the Fall differs from the account of the Creation, which precedes it in the Book of Genesis, inasmuch as it relates to a matter which may have come within the range of human experience. Whatever were the first beginnings of the human race, man must, at some time or another, have become conscious of sin for the first time; and it may be that the story of the Fall contains some traditional recollection of this first consciousness of sin, and of the sorrowful experiences connected with it.

The idea of an earthly paradise like the Garden of Eden is a common element in the religious traditions of mankind. The Arabs, the Indians, the Chinese, the Persians, all have legends of a garden or beautiful country, where the fairest flowers flourish, and from which living waters flow. In the Indian and Chinese legends, as in the Bible

story, the stream that flows from Paradise is the source of four great rivers that water the Earth.

It need hardly be said that there is no place in existence which corresponds to this description. Still it is not unlikely that all these traditions are founded on the recollection of some common home from which these different races originally came. The land which is supposed to be thus indicated is believed by many to have been situated somewhere in the centre of Asia.

The wide-spread traditions of the Flood must surely point to some great primæval catastrophe, the ineffaceable impression of which has been carried by the different branches of the human race into the remotest corners of the Earth; unless we are to suppose—and the supposition is not an unreasonable one—that there have been more than one such calamity affecting different races of mankind. The striking peculiarity of the Hebrew narrative is not that it relates the story of such a catastrophe, but that it connects it with the suggestions of conscience in the human breast, and with the far-reaching designs of Providence for the development and purification of the human race.

Abraham was a real Person.

Though many later traditions have gathered around the name of Abraham, there can be no doubt that he was a real historical character, and that the main outlines of his history are truly preserved in the Book of Genesis. The ancient fragment in chapter xiv., to which we have already referred, and in which he appears as the warlike chief of a small body of immigrants settled in the land of Canaan, no doubt gives an accurate picture of “Abram the Hebrew,” as he appeared to his contemporaries. But the

traditions about him agree in also representing the brave soldier and the trusty friend as the founder of a great religious movement, and in connecting his migration from the East with religion.

The memory of Abraham and of his son "Ismail" is preserved in the traditions of the Arabs as well as of the Jews. In the Koran he is described by the title *El Khalil*, or the Friend, that is of God. This title is also found in Holy Scripture, and though it does not occur in the Book of Genesis, it may well have been founded on some of the narratives in that book. Many of the Scripture narratives and other Jewish stories about Abraham are reproduced in the Koran with little or no alteration. It is not supposed, however, that this resemblance is altogether due to the correspondence of two independent traditions, but to the fact that Mahomet borrowed much of the contents of the Koran from Jewish sources. Still it is not doubted that there was a genuine tradition about Abraham existing among the Arabians before the time of Mahomet. But it is impossible now to separate this original Arabian tradition from the Jewish materials which have become incorporated with it in the Koran.

The Descendants of Abraham; the Biblical Genealogies.

In the Book of Genesis Abraham is represented as the father of many nations. Through Isaac and Jacob he is the progenitor of the people of Israel, and through Ishmael of the Ishmaelites, another nation of twelve tribes.¹ From the sons of Keturah are also descended many nations, some of whose names we find mentioned again.² Esau, the grandson of Abraham, is the father of the Edomites.³ In

¹ Gen. xxv. 12-16.

² Gen. xxv. 1-4.

³ Gen. xxxvi. 1-19.

addition to all this, the Moabites and Ammonites are said to have derived their origin from Lot, Abraham's nephew;¹ and Nahor, Abraham's brother, who was settled at Haran, was the father of twelve nations by his two wives Milcah and Reumah.² This account of the origin of the nations more immediately connected with the Jews is part of a genealogical system, which runs like a network through the whole of the Historical Books. It begins with the first man, Adam, and is carried down to the very latest names that are mentioned in the Old Testament. When we look over the whole of these genealogies, it seems impossible to say for certain what we are to make of them. At times they appear to be plainly put forward as personal pedigrees, in the ordinary sense of the word. There can be no doubt that Abraham and Lot, for instance, are represented as real persons, or that the account of the birth of Isaac, or of the twelve sons of Jacob, is intended to be understood in a literal sense. Even the ancestors of Noah, and his immediate descendants, in spite of their enormous ages, are unquestionably meant for real men; for the date of the birth of each, and the number of years which his father lived afterwards, are particularly given. But elsewhere we find pedigrees which the writer can hardly have expected his readers to accept as literally true. In many instances not only races, but names of places, are worked into them, and treated exactly as if they were persons. Thus, Mizraim, that is the dual name for Northern and Southern Egypt, is the son of Ham and the father of several races.³ Canaan, another son of Ham, begat "Sidon his first-born," and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgasite.⁴ In a later

¹ Gen. xix. 30-38.

³ Gen. x. 6, 13, 14.

² Gen. xxii. 20-24.

⁴ Gen. x. 15, 16.

genealogy the cities of Ziph, Mareshah, Hebron, Tappuah, Maon, Bethzur, Madmannah, and Gibea are all counted as descendants of Caleb the companion of Joshua.¹ It is well known that the Jews in later times preserved their family registers with great care; and perhaps we are to suppose that the whole genealogical tree was completed by working into it ancient records or other materials, as the names of cities or races, and by using such other information about the descent of the different nations as existed at the time, from whatever sources it may have been derived. In the table of the descendants of Seth, in Genesis v. some names correspond with those of the descendants of Cain in the preceding chapter. This correspondence suggests that we have here two branches of the same tradition, and that the antiquity of the names at least is hereby proved. The conclusions of modern scholarship as to the classification of nations and languages have been, on the whole, wonderfully in accord with the division of mankind in the Book of Genesis, though there have been some difficulties and some divergences between the two; and we may presume that the pedigrees of the descendants of Abraham and his brother Nahor correctly represent the relationship between the Jews and the kindred races that lived near them.

Historical Truth of the Exodus.

It is easy to see that the numbers of the Israelites who marched out of Egypt, as they are given in the Pentateuch, are too large to be reconciled with other passages in the history of these times; and the artificial character of the present narrative, as well as the legendary nature of

¹ Compare 1 Chron. ii. 42–50, with Joshua xv.

some of the materials from which it has been compiled, betray themselves in many particulars. But it is impossible to doubt that the story is founded on fact, and that it is true in its leading features. Some of the narratives relating to this period are no doubt of very early date, and were perhaps almost contemporaneous with the events to which they refer. In any case, we may accept as indisputable facts of history the sojourn of the Hebrew people in Egypt after their migration from the East, their departure from Egypt under the guidance of Moses, their escape from their pursuers through the Red Sea, the influence of Moses as a great legislator and Divine teacher on the future character and institutions of the people, and their occupation of the land of Canaan, after his death, under the command of his successor Joshua. Wherever we look in the books of the Old Testament, in the Psalms and the prophetical writings, as well as in the history, we find traces of the deep impression which these events made upon the national mind of Israel. The stories of "the wondrous works in the land of Ham," and "the fearful things by the Red Sea," of the days when the Almighty led His people "like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron," were the constant subjects of their thoughts. They were themes for thanksgiving in the happiest days; they were the foundation of their hopes in adversity; they were to Israel, as a nation, what the ineffaceable memories of the days of childhood are to each of us individually, an abiding influence upon the character for ever.¹

It must be borne in mind—and the same remark will apply elsewhere—that the importance of these great occurrences to the Jewish people and to mankind at large does not depend upon the miraculous details or the poeti-

¹ See Pss. lxxvii., lxxviii., cv., evi., &c.

cal embellishments of the narrative in which they are recorded, but upon the reality of the great facts themselves, and the results that followed from them. It is not because we read of Moses' rod being turned into a serpent, or of the waters of the sea or the river standing upon an heap, of the walls of Jericho falling down, or the sun and the moon standing still, that we see the hand of God in Hebrew history. But when we take a wider view of things, and see how the long course of events resulted in the preservation of the Jewish people, and in the progress and purification of their national religion, until its further development in Christianity, then we understand, as far as we can be said to understand anything on these subjects,¹ how the Providence of God was specially manifested in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, in their occupation of the Land of Canaan, and in the rest of that long series of events of which these two formed a part.

Egyptian Recollections of the Exodus.

Josephus quotes from Manetho an account of the Exodus, which differs from the Jewish story in the colour which it gives to the transaction, but which also curiously

¹ Our power of understanding Providence has been well compared to the power of a person who appreciates music, but has little or no knowledge of mechanics, to understand an organ. He can recognize a tune when it is played ; he can feel its power ; he can be sure that it has been produced intentionally, and not by accident. But when he looks into the interior of the instrument, and endeavours to understand its mechanism, he is quite bewildered. So we can understand the results of Providence ; we can be sure that they were designed, or at least that they indicate something in the Infinite mind of God, which we, with our limited human understandings, can only think of as design. But when we turn away from the practical aspect of the question, and attempt to understand the methods by which these results are produced, then we are liable to get confused.

agrees with it, and thereby confirms it in some important particulars.¹ According to Manetho's account, the Exodus took place in the reign of a King Amenophis. This Amenophis wishing to purify the country, in order that he might be permitted "to see the gods," banished a large body of lepers and other unclean persons, forcing them to labour in the quarries east of the Nile, along with other Egyptians who were already there. But there were some educated priests amongst these lepers, and the Divine anger was kindled against the king. The lepers requested permission to settle in the ruined city of Avaris. As soon as they got possession of this defensible position, they chose as leader one Osarsiph, a priest of Heliopolis. Osarsiph, who was afterwards called Moses, established religious institutions among the lepers directly opposed to those of Egypt. He fortified Avaris, and revolted against the king. The rebels sent ambassadors to Jerusalem, and called in the aid of the Shepherds who had been expelled from Egypt by a former king. The allies completely occupied lower Egypt, Amenophis having retired to Ethiopia, convinced that to fight against the lepers would be to fight against the gods. For thirteen years the rebels held possession of the country, trampling it under foot, and insulting the Egyptian religion in every way. Then Amenophis returned, and with the aid of his son Raamses drove the invaders from Egypt, pursuing them as far as the Syrian (*i. e.* the Palestinian) boundary.

¹ *Ag. Apion.* i. 26, &c. Manetho was an Egyptian priest who lived in the time of the first Ptolemy (B.C., 323-285). He wrote an account of the religion and history of his country in the Greek language. His work is now lost, and is only known to us by the extracts in Josephus, and by lists of the Egyptian kings taken from it by the Christian historians Africanus and Eusebius.

The way in which this story differs from that in the Book of Exodus, and the additional particulars which it gives, show that it represents an independent tradition. It agrees with the Jewish account in the following points: the unjust oppression of the Hebrews in Egypt, the facts that others were associated with them in their revolt,¹ and that the movement received assistance from outside.² The name Raamses, differently introduced, also forms an interesting point of correspondence.³ The respect with which the religious character of the lepers is at first treated in the Egyptian tradition is also very remarkable. It suggests some common ground between the Mosaic religion and that of Egypt, while the new departure which the Jewish religion takes under Moses is also clearly indicated.

The tradition of the Exodus also appears in later Egyptian writers; but with them it is more fanciful, and evidently wanders farther from the truth. It has been a great disappointment to scholars that they have not as yet been able to find any allusions to the Exodus in the monumental records of Egypt.

History of the Ten Commandments.

If the version of the Ten Commandments which is given in Exodus be compared with that given in Deuteronomy, it will be seen that there are some variations between the two.⁴ It may also be noticed that the variations occur, not in the primary commands themselves, but in the additions which are made to them by way of expansion or explanation. The fourth commandment supplies an instance of this. In both versions the observance of

¹ Ex. xii. 38. See also Ex. i. 15-21.

³ Ex. i. 11.

² Ex. iv. 18, 27; xviii.: Numb. x. 29-32.

⁴ Exodus xx. and Deut. v.

the seventh day as a day of rest is enjoined. But in Exodus the rest of the Almighty after the six days' work of creation is assigned as the reason for the observance; in Deuteronomy the command to keep the Sabbath day is connected with the deliverance from Egypt. If either of these reasons possessed the authority of an original Mosaic copy, it is very unlikely that its place would have been usurped by the other. It has therefore been conjectured that the Ten Commandments—the ten “words”—existed at first in the simplest form, and that the additions and explanations in both versions were accretions of later growth. Ewald is of opinion that some of these additions, which are the same in both versions, are in style of language so like the original commands, that they must be supposed to belong to the Mosaic age, if not, indeed, to have been added by Moses himself. He supposes that the ten words, as inscribed upon the two tables of stone, were as follows:—

I.

*I am Jahreh, thy God, who delivered thee out of Egypt, out
of the house of bondage.*

- (1) *Thou shalt have no other God before me.*
- (2) *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.*
- (3) *Thou shalt not idly utter the name of Jahreh, thy God.*
- (4) *Thou shalt remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
- (5) *Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother.*

II.

- (1) *Thou shalt not murder.*
- (2) *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
- (3) *Thou shalt not steal.*
- (4) *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*
- (5) *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.*

This division into two tables, each containing five commands, is not that to which we are now accustomed : the first four being generally taken as the table containing our duty towards God, and the last six as the second table, containing our duty towards our neighbours. The equal division into two fives is in itself more natural; and any classical scholar who remembers the meaning of the Latin word *pietas*, which includes filial affection as well as “piety” in the more common sense of the word, will find no difficulty in supposing that the Hebrew lawgiver placed the fifth commandment on the same tablet with the first four.

Are the Ten Commandments of Permanent Obligation?

It is commonly said that the Decalogue contains the “moral law” as distinguished from the ceremonial and civil law which follows it in the Pentateuch. But this distinction is not quite correct. There are many other laws in the Pentateuch that may be called moral in just the same sense that any of the Ten Commandments may be so called. And there are two of the Ten Commandments, namely, the second and the fourth, which must be admitted to be positive or temporary in their nature as distinguished from moral or permanent. The transitory nature of the fourth commandment has been unanimously acknowledged by the Christian Church, which has universally substituted the first day of the week as a day of rest and worship in place of the Jewish Sabbath, and nowhere makes the Jewish regulations respecting the observance of the Sabbath binding on Christians in the observance of Sunday. And, in spite of the prohibition of the Jewish second commandment, a great part of the Christian Church, if not the whole, has thought it allow-

able and expedient to employ images and pictures as aids to devotion. But if we look at the spirit of these commandments, and not at the letter, we shall find that they both contain valuable principles of permanent application. The fourth may be taken as an expression of the principle that rest from earthly toil and anxiety, and the devotion of part of our time to the study and contemplation of Divine things, are needful for our spiritual welfare, and are therefore a part of our duty. And while we freely acknowledge the differences between the position of Christians at the present day and the circumstances of the Jews when the command not to make graven images for worship was first given to them, we may still find in the second commandment a warning of the dangers that attend the use of all symbolism in religious worship, as well as a wholesome reminder of the impossibility of picturing by human art or imagination that Being whom no man hath seen at any time, but who has been pleased to make known to us creatures of time some of His relations to us and part of His will and purpose concerning us.

When we come to read the New Testament we shall see how the principles of these commandments are preserved and developed in the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not come to destroy them but to fulfil them—to fill them out—to give them a fuller meaning—to complete the revelation of the will of God, which in them was made incompletely but truly.

Date of the Ceremonial and Civil Law.

The careful student cannot fail to be struck by the fact that many of the laws, which in the Pentateuch are represented as having been given to the people in the wilderness, appear from the subsequent history not to have come

into actual operation for a long time after. According to the Law, the people are to destroy all the "high places" at which the Canaanites served their gods, and they are strictly forbidden to sacrifice anywhere except in the one appointed place, which the Lord "shall choose out of all the tribes."¹ But in point of fact the high places are not destroyed for centuries. They are allowed to continue, and sacrifices are offered at them and at other places through the land by the Hebrews, and that not by the careless and disobedient, but by many who are held up as patterns of zeal and obedience, by the repentant people at Bochim, by Gideon at Ophrah, by Manoah at Zorah, by Samuel at Mizpeh and elsewhere, at Ramah, Gilgal, and Bethlehem, by David at the threshing-floor of Araunah, by "the people" generally until the time of Solomon, and afterwards, as we have already seen, under the best kings of Judah, until the time of Hezekiah.² Many of these same instances also surprise us by a seeming disregard of another provision of the Law, which forbade any person who was not of the family of Aaron to perform the office of a priest under pain of the heaviest penalties.³ Inter-marriage with the heathen, again, is most strictly prohibited. But Rahab of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess are admitted by marriage into the family of Israel. Samson takes a wife from among the Philistines. David marries Maachah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur. Solomon's marriages are not condemned until his wives "turn away his heart" from God, and one of the Psalms

¹ Deut. xii. 1-14 : Lev. xvii. 1-7.

² Jud. ii. 5; vi. 24; xiii. 19: 1 Sam. vii. 9, 10, 17; ix. 13, 14; x. 8; xvi. 1-5: 2 Sam. xxiv. 25: 1 Kings iii. 2, 3; xv. 14, &c. See pp. 81, 82, &c.

³ Numb. iii. 10; xviii. 7.

celebrates the marriage of a king of Israel, probably Solomon, with a foreign princess.¹ The account of Samuel's objection to the appointment of a king, when provision for the kingdom had already been made in the Divine law, is an old subject of perplexity.² The dismay of the good King Josiah when the book of the law was found in the Temple, and his declaration that their fathers had not hearkened to the words of that book, also occur to us.³ Even as late as the time of Nehemiah, when the feast of tabernacles was celebrated by the people in strict accordance with the provisions of the Pentateuchal law, we are told that "since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so."⁴

Though some of these instances of apparent ignorance of the Law may be explained away, the most probable account of the whole matter is that which is now accepted by most of the ablest scholars who have studied the subject, that many of the laws, and especially of the ceremonial laws, which in the Pentateuch are associated with the name and time of Moses, really belong to a later date. On the other hand, it is obvious that many of the principles of Hebrew law must have been established before the time of Moses. No lawgiver, however great, has ever been known to make the laws of his country entirely from the beginning, as none has been known to leave them in such a state that they have not required subsequent additions or modifications, according to the altered circumstances of later times. Two instances will be sufficient to show that

¹ Deut. vii. 3: Josh. xxiii. 12: Josh. vi. 25: Matt. i. 5: Ruth i. 4; iv. 13, 21: Judges xiv.: 1 Kings iii. 1-4; xi. 1-10: 1 Chron. iii. 2: Ps. xlvi.

² 1 Sam. viii. 6-22: Deut. xvii. 14-20.

³ 2 Kings xxii. 11-13.

⁴ Neh. viii. 14-17.

Moses was no exception to one part of this rule, any more than to the other. The observance of the Sabbath may have been re-enacted and regulated by him at the time of the Exodus; but there is the strongest evidence that a seventh day's rest was an ancient institution amongst the Hebrews. The punishment of murder by the *goel* or revenger of blood is also extremely like an ancient custom. It is not the kind of institution that is usually called into existence by the fiat of a lawgiver; and instances are to be found elsewhere of similar usages surviving from ruder ages. But we can understand that Moses should have imposed checks upon the evils of a custom, which he could not abolish, or perhaps did not wish to abolish as yet.¹

As it is certain that some of the principles of Jewish law are older than the legislation of Moses, it is not impossible that some of the statutes, in the very words in which we still read them, were in existence before his time. But whether any of the words of the Law are pre-Mosaic or not, there can be little doubt that the difficulty which we occasionally find in reconciling its provisions one with another is due, in some cases at least, to the fact that the Pentateuch contains ordinances of different dates. The unique position which Moses held in connexion with the history of Hebrew legislation would account for the fact that the Law came to be known by his name. The fact that it was so known might go some

¹ It is not improbable that in the laws relating to the observance of the Sabbath, and in those relating to homicide, we have examples of later additions to the Law, as well as of elements that belonged both to the age of Moses and to the times before him; for there are many repetitions and some inconsistencies in the laws relating to Sabbatical observances, and the selection of the cities of refuge, and some of the regulations with regard to them, have every appearance of being ante-dated in the Pentateuch.

way towards explaining how it came about that all its ordinances were attributed to him, and that the story of their origin was woven in the Pentateuch into the narrative of the Mosaic time. Probably the construction of the Books of the Law in their present shape and order was not all the work of one man. There may have been rearrangements or re-editings of the different portions of the collection, or of the whole of it, executed from time to time, before it finally appeared in its present shape.

Attempts have been made by critics to assign their respective dates to the different component parts of the Pentateuchal collection of laws, but not as yet with any very satisfactory results. One theory is that the earliest legislation is contained in the section which immediately follows the Decalogue in the Book of Exodus. But there are other summaries of the law, as well as this one, to be found among the materials from which the Pentateuch is compiled. There is one in Leviticus xix., described in the English Bible as "A repetition of sundry laws." There is another in Exodus xxxiv. No sufficient reason can be given why one of these summaries may not have been made in the same way as the others.

*Was Deuteronomy the Book of the Law that was found
in the Temple in the reign of Josiah?*

There is a very strong consensus of critical opinion in favour of the view which connects the Book of Deuteronomy with the time of Josiah's reformation. It is supposed by many that it was the book found in the Temple, the reading of which had such an effect upon the king; that it had been written with a view to helping on the reforms then in contemplation, and that the story of its having been found was an invention—a pious fraud—on

the part of Hilkiah, or else that the high priest was himself deceived by some other person, who had secreted the book in the Temple.

Though the Book of Deuteronomy is now part of the Pentateuch, and wrought into its plan, it certainly did not originate in the same way as the other four books. It is distinguished from them by its flowing and rhetorical style, as well as by the unity of its structure; and it is evidently the composition of one writer. Moreover, the allusions to the contents of the book found in the Temple would suit the Book of Deuteronomy very well. But further than this we can hardly go with safety. We must be very chary of accepting theories, which, after all, are only conjectural explanations of facts, of which there may be many other explanations unknown to us. And that is distinctly the state of the case with respect to this question about the Book of the Law found in the Temple.

The objection that Hilkiah would not have been likely to be guilty of such a piece of deception in such a cause is hardly of much weight, for the standard of morality on such matters among the Jews at that day may have been very different from what it is in our Christian times;¹ and a zealous advocate of the reformation would have found much to urge in favour of the deceit.

Development of the Ceremonial System after the Return from Babylon.

In the period that followed the rebuilding of the Temple the minute study of the law became the absorbing pursuit of religious Jews; and there is much to be said for the opinion, held by some scholars, that the complete cere-

¹ Compare Gen. xii. 10–20; xx.; xxvi. 6–11; xxx. 37–43, &c.

monial system, as we find it in the Book of Leviticus, was not developed until that time. If this be so, the composition of the Book of Leviticus would have to be placed in that period. It would not, however, be necessary to suppose that all the Pentateuch was composed then. Part of it might have existed before, and the Book of Leviticus and other portions might have been added at the same time that the whole underwent a general revision.

The Bible a Record of Progressive Revelation.

As later writers pushed back into the past the date of the completed ceremonial law, so it is also probable that, in other respects, they read back into the past the more advanced ideas of their own days. There are hints that the faith of earlier times was more elementary and imperfect than a superficial reading of their pages would lead us to believe. Many passages show that the Hebrews were slow in emancipating themselves from the service of the gods which their fathers served beyond the river Euphrates, or in Egypt;¹ and that the worship which they once offered was of a very different kind from that which in more enlightened times they understood the Almighty to require of his creatures.² There is much difference of opinion as to the exact interpretation of these hints; but there is clear evidence, even from the most cursory study of the history of the Jews, that God's revelation of Himself to them was a progressive revelation. No doubt we should see this even more clearly than we do if we could disentangle the different records contained in the history, and arrange them in order, according to the dates to

¹ Gen. xxxi. 19; xxxv. 2: Ex. xxxii. 1-6: Jos. xxiv. 2, 14, 23.

² Gen. xxii. 1-19: Jud. xi. 30-10: Micah vi. 6-8.

which they respectively belong; and so compare the religious views of the representative writers of different ages, as some critical scholars have attempted to do.

This study of the gradual progress of Revelation is of great practical importance to us; for one of the strongest proofs of the truth of the Religion of the present day is to be found in its relation to the Religion of the past. By this study our faith in the Unseen is shown to be no mere passing fancy of to-day or yesterday. Religion is not a mere bubble floating for a little while upon the stream of time, to be seen one moment, to be gone the next. It is a living, growing Truth, whose roots reach far back into the centuries—even to the beginning. The earliest ages of creation were a preparation for its appearance. It showed itself in the Revelation of Divine Truth made to those who were first able to receive it. With unfailing vitality it grew on through many vicissitudes. The prophets nurtured it. The law also gave its guiding and protecting care. Both the law and the prophets tended to the same end—“to bring us to Christ.”

Two-fold Tradition of the Conquest of Canaan.

When we compare the historical portions of the later books of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua with the Book of Judges, we find that there are apparently traces of two traditions of the occupation of the land of Canaan, one of which places in the days of Moses and Joshua events which, according to the other, did not occur until a later period. Thus, in the Book of Numbers the Israelites under Moses are said to have utterly destroyed the Canaanites of the south and their cities, so that the place was called Hormah, or Destruction;¹ but in the Book of

¹ Numb. xxi. 1-3.

Judges the origin of the name Hormah is connected with a slaughter of the Canaanites and the destruction of their city by the tribes of Judah and Simeon, after the occupation of the land of Canaan.¹ The Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, again, relate before the death of Moses the seizure of part of the territory beyond Jordan by Jair the son of Manasseh, who calls the district after his own name; while, according to another account, the name of the district is derived from Jair the Judge, who lived long after.² The town of Debir is related to have been taken by Joshua and utterly destroyed; but a passage which describes the taking of the same town by Othniel the Kenizzite is inserted twice after, the second insertion being in the Book of Judges, and as a part of the history of the period after Joshua's death.³ To quote one more instance, Jabin, king of Hazor, and his confederates are beaten by Joshua, Hazor itself is burned, and its inhabitants are all put to the sword; yet in the days of the Judges another Jabin, king of the same Hazor, appears, who mightily oppresses the children of Israel, and is also destroyed with his city and people. The resemblance between the two narratives in this case is very remarkable.⁴ Much ingenuity has been expended on the endeavour to explain these and other repetitions without sacrificing the accuracy of the history of this period. The true explanation is, no doubt, that which we have suggested, namely, that there are combined in the present narrative two traditions of the Conquest of Canaan. It is also probable that the tradition which represents these conquests as

¹ Judges i. 16, 17. ² Numb. xxxii. 41 : Deut. iii. 14 : Judges x. 3-5.

³ Jos. x. 38-39 ; xv. 15-19 : Judges i. 11-15. Compare Judges i. 1 and i. 9.

⁴ Josh. xi. 1-14 : Judges iv. See the articles "Barak" and "Jabin" in Smith's *Bib. Dict.*

having taken place at the later date is, on the whole, the more correct; that the first occupation of the land of Canaan did not take place in one great triumphant movement, such as is represented in the Book of Joshua; but that it was made more gradually by a smaller force, perhaps by a succession of invasions by kindred or allied tribes; that the hold on the land was only slowly acquired, and grew with the strength of the immigrant people, and that the legends, which throw back many of the events and represent all as having taken place in the time of Moses and Joshua, arose from the tendency, which we observe elsewhere, to overlook gradual movements, and to gather the events of history together round great favourite names. This would agree with the conviction, forced upon us by other considerations, that the strength of Israel in the wilderness cannot have been at all so great, or their organization so complete, as the narrative in the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua would lead us to suppose. It would be utterly opposed to all historical probability to suppose that, if the Hebrews entered Canaan with such a force of fighting men as is described in the Book of Numbers, the people of Canaan could have again re-established their independence so soon after having suffered such defeats at the hands of Joshua.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE LATER HISTORICAL BOOKS.

The Books of Samuel and Kings.

THE four books, which we know as the Books of Samuel and Kings, formed in the original Hebrew only two, viz., one Book of Samuel and one Book of Kings; and they are still so reckoned by the Jews of the present day. The division into four was first made by the Greek translators in the Septuagint. From the Septuagint it passed into the Vulgate.¹ From the Vulgate it has been adopted in all the later Christian translations; and it is now used even in our modern versions of the Hebrew Bible.

Jewish Tradition as to the Date and Authorship of the Books of Samuel and Kings.

Of the authorship of these books nothing is known; nor do we know the exact date at which they were written. It is even uncertain whether they are both the work of one writer or not, different opinions having been maintained by scholars on this question. There is a late Jewish tradition which says that the Book of Kings was written by the prophet Jeremiah in the time of the captivity. But

¹ The *Vulgate* was a Latin translation of the Old Testament, made by S. Jerome at the end of the fourth century. It became the commonly received version in all the Latin churches, and from that fact the name *Vulgate (vulgata versio)* was given to it.

the same passage in which this statement is made ascribes to Samuel the authorship of "his book," that is of our First and Second Books of Samuel, notwithstanding the fact that Samuel's own death is recorded in the first of these books, and though it is quite evident from many passages that the author of the Books of Samuel regarded the times of which he was writing as belonging to the past. In one passage of the First Book of Samuel "the kings of Judah" are mentioned,¹ which shows that the book cannot have been written before the division of the kingdom. This statement about the authorship of the Books of Samuel is a fair sample of many of the traditional Jewish ideas on the subject of the authorship and origin of the sacred books. The Book of Samuel evidently derived its name from the fact that Samuel was the leading character in the period to which it relates, just as the Books that precede it were called the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. It was, perhaps, for a similar reason that the first five books were originally called the Books of Moses, and not from any idea that Moses was the writer of them. The theory of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch may have arisen from its title, in the same way as the tradition that Samuel wrote the book which bore his name. The Books of Kings cannot have been completed before the latter part of the Babylonish captivity, for the last chapter of the Second Book relates the release of Jehoiachin from prison in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity, and adds that he was kindly treated by the king of Babylon during the remainder of his life.

¹ 1 Sam. xxvii. 6

*Sources of the History of the Regal Period in the Books
of Samuel and Kings.*

The Book of Jasher, which is mentioned in the Book of Joshua in connexion with the poetical account of the sun and the moon standing still to give time for the rout of the followers of the five kings, is again quoted in the Second Book of Samuel as the source from which the writer of that book derived the lamentation with which "David lamented over Saul and over Jonathan his son" after the battle of Gilboa.¹ This Book of Jasher would appear, from these two references to it, to have contained a collection of poetical pieces, perhaps to have been exclusively a collection of such pieces relating to the war-like exploits of the early heroes. It is further evident from other passages that some of the materials for the history of the regal period were derived from sources similar to those from which so much of the earlier histories was compiled. But it is also clear that the writer, or writers, of the Books of Samuel and Kings had access to more accurate and reliable authorities; and we feel, as we read these books, that we are at length passing into the region of exact history, resting upon contemporary records. It is generally agreed that public annals were regularly kept during the time of the kings. The public recorder, or remembrancer, is mentioned among the state officials in the reigns of David and Solomon, as well as under the later kings.² It is probable that the notices, so uniformly given in the Historical Books, of the children and wives of the several kings, and in Judah of the king's mother also, and the accounts of their buildings and other under-

¹ Jos. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18.

² 2 Sam. viii. 16; xx. 24; 1 Kings iv. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18-37.

takings, were derived from these public records. There are also many lists of names and some other portions both of these histories and of the Books of Chronicles, which are supposed to have come from the same source.¹ But it is not so clear whether the writer of our books drew his information directly from the public records or not. A “Book of the Acts of Solomon” is quoted,² and Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah are mentioned as authorities for the reigns of most of the succeeding kings.³ These Books of Chronicles—not to be confounded with our canonical Books of Chronicles—and this Life of Solomon may possibly have been the original state records; but it is more likely that they were historical works, preceding our Books of Samuel and Kings, compiled wholly or in part from the public annals. It is certain that some writing intervened between the contemporary record and our present completed books. One reference will be sufficient to prove this. In the passage in the First Book of Kings which tells how the ark of the covenant was brought into Solomon’s Temple, after the description of the position in which the staves of the ark were placed, the words are added—“and there they are unto this day.”⁴ These words could not have been written by a contemporary, for they speak of the time of writing as a later day; neither could they have been written at the time when the Book of Kings was completed, for the Temple had then been long destroyed. They must therefore have been written at some intervening time. The passage in which the words occur, as well as other passages in these books in which similar expressions occur, may be

¹ 2 Sam. xxi. 15–22; xxiii. 8–39 : 1 Chron. xii. 1–22, 23–40 ; xx. 4–8; xxvii.

² 1 Kings xi. 41. ³ 1 Kings xiv. 19, 29, &c. ⁴ 1 Kings viii. 8.

quotations from works which were used in the composition of the Books of Samuel and Kings, perhaps from the Life of Solomon and the Chronicles mentioned above. Or it may be that the books, which we now know as the Books of Samuel and Kings, themselves existed in earlier forms and received later additions. Of this we cannot be certain. As in the case of the Pentateuch, we know not what the process was by which the present histories reached their final shape. What we do know for certain may be summed up in three propositions, viz., (1) There were contemporary records. (2) Whether directly or indirectly, some of the materials of the present histories were derived from those records. (3) The present books also contain materials drawn from other sources.

The Moabite Stone.

In the first verse of the Second Book of the Kings the brief statement is made that “Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.” From a later chapter we learn that this rebellion took place under a king named Mesha, and an account is given of some of the military operations that ensued.¹ Though one victory over the Moabites is said to have been gained by the allied forces of Israel and Judah, aided by the subject king of Edom, it is evident, even from the account given by their own side, that the Israelites failed to accomplish the main object of the war, and that the Moabites succeeded in establishing their independence.

In quite recent times a discovery has been made which is of much interest in connexion with this passage in the history of Israel. In the year 1868 an inscribed stone was

¹ 2 Kings i. 1; iii. 4-27; xiii. 20, 21.

unexpectedly found at a place which had previously been identified as the site of the ancient Moabite city of Dibon, frequently mentioned in the Old Testament.¹ This stone, which is now in the Louvre at Paris, is a slab of basalt, a very hard and durable substance ; and proves on examination to have been a memorial set up by the king of Moab, to commemorate the deliverance of his country from the Israelitish yoke. The inscription is in a dialect closely akin to Hebrew, and written in Phœnician characters. It contains many names both of persons and of places already well known to us ; and there is hardly a sentence in it which is not, from this or from some other reason, full of interest to the student of the Old Testament. The writer describes himself as Mesha, the son of Chemoshgad, king of Moab, the Dibonite, and says that he erected this stone to his god Chemosh, who saved Moab from its spoilers; for it had been oppressed many days by [*Omri*]i king of Israel and his son. Part of the name of the king of Israel is unfortunately missing, some fragments of the stone having been lost ; but the final *i* is left, and the name of Omri as the oppressor of Moab occurs in full elsewhere on the stone. The inscription describes the successive victories by which Mesha gradually wrested the territory of Moab from the hands of Israel. It then goes on to enumerate the public works which he executed, telling how he fortified the cities which he recovered from the enemy, and made other improvements in them, rebuilding some which had been reduced to ruins in the war, and directing special attention to providing cisterns within the fortifications, and how he

¹ On the invasion of Canaan, Dibon was taken and occupied by the tribe of Gad. It is sometimes called Dibon-Ga'l (Numb. xxi. 30; xxxii. 3, 34; xxxiii. 45, 46). In later times we find it again in possession of Moab (Is. xv. 2; Jer. xlvi. 18, 22, 24).

made a road across the Arnon. The inscription concludes with an account of an expedition, apparently to recover Horonaim, which is mentioned in the Bible as a Moabite town;¹ but some fragments of the stone are lost here, and the meaning is obscure.

There can be little doubt that this remarkable monument of antiquity refers to the war by which Moab established her independence of Israel. The inscription agrees with the history in the time of the revolt, and in the name of the rebel king. The account of Mesha's labours in city building and otherwise repairing the damage done in the war, and of his care to provide a water supply in a situation protected from the ravages of future invaders, curiously coincides with a passage in the Book of Kings in reference to the devastation of Moab by the invading armies, which were to "smite every fenced city and every choice city," and "fell every good tree, and stop all the wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones."² It is also interesting to find on the Moabite monument so many names of places which are mentioned in the Bible as belonging to the Moabite district; and it is worth noticing that the name of the Moabitish king Chemoshgad strangely combines the title of the heathen divinity with that of the Hebrew tribe which had so long occupied a part of his country.

Assyrian Kings mentioned in the Old Testament.

Five kings of Assyria are mentioned by name in the Historical Books, and another, Sargon, is mentioned in one passage in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. The names of all these kings except one are to be found in the

¹ Is. xv. 5; Jer. xlvi. 3, 5, 34.

² 2 Kings iii. 19.

Assyrian inscriptions, which also contain many references to the campaigns and conquests of the Assyrians in Palestine and the neighbouring countries, and throw much light upon the history of this period. In general the two histories agree well together; but, as was to have been expected, the attempt to reconcile them in detail has not been in all cases quite successful, and some discrepancies exist, about which it would be premature to speak positively in the present state of our knowledge. The chief difficulty arises from the chronological differences between the two records. In the words of a late distinguished Assyrian scholar, “although there is a striking agreement in the order and substance of the events mentioned in both histories, there sometimes appears to be considerable difference as to dates.”¹

The following list gives the names of the kings that reigned about the time in question, with the approximate dates of each, according to the inscriptions. The names of those kings who are also mentioned in the Old Testament are in large print:—

VUL-NIRARI III. (B.C. 812–783.) *Pul?*

SHALMANESER III. (B.C. 783–773.)

ASSUR-DAN III. (B.C. 773–755.)

ASSUR-NIRARI II. (B.C. 755–745.) *Pul?* (2 K. xv. 19, 20; 1 Chr. v. 26.)

TIGLATH-PILESER II. (B.C. 745–727.) (2 K. xv. 29; xvi. 7–18, &c.)

SHALMANESER IV. (B.C. 727–722.) (2 K. xvii. 3–41;² xviii. 9–12, &c.)

SARGON. (B.C. 722–705.) (Is. xx. 1.)

SENNACHERIB. (B.C. 705–681.) (2 K. xviii. 13–37; xix. 1–36, &c.)

ESARHADDON. (B.C. 681–668.) (2 K. xix. 37, &c.)

¹ Preface to the S. P. C. K. *History of Assyria*, by the late George Smith.

² It is not clear whether there is a second king of Assyria referred to in this chapter. An inscription of Sargon claims for him the honour of having taken Samaria in the first year of his reign.

None of the Assyrian inscriptions contain the name of Pul, who, according to the Hebrew historians, was an Assyrian king who invaded Samaria before Tiglath-pileser and received tribute from Menahem, king of Israel; and the identification of this monarch has become a standing puzzle with the students of Assyrian history. It has been suggested that Pul may have been another name for Tiglath-pileser; in spite of the obvious objection that the two appear to be clearly distinguished by the Jewish historians.¹ The name Pul resembles the first part of the name of Vul-nirari, a king who made expeditions to Palestine, and claims in his inscriptions to have conquered Omri (or Samaria), Philistia, and Elom. It is, however, an objection to the identification of Pul with Vul-nirari III., that in the Assyrian record Vul-nirari precedes Tiglath-pileser by a much longer period than Pul does in the Hebrew history. Very few inscriptions have as yet been discovered relating to the reigns of the two kings who immediately preceded Tiglath-pileser; it is therefore possible that we may yet find some record which will throw light upon the subject of Pul's identity.

The Books of Chronicles and the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah; When were they written?

Like the Books of Samuel and of Kings, the two Books of Chronicles formed but one work in the original Hebrew, and the history of the division is the same in all three cases.² The Greek title of the Books of Chronicles is “*Paralipomena*,” or “things left out,” a title which S. Athanasius explains by telling us that “many things omitted in the Books of the Kings are contained here.”

¹ See also 1 Chron. v. 26.

² See p. 146.

The Books of Chronicles and the Book of Ezra form a continuous history, and it is generally agreed that both compositions were the work of the same writer. The reasons for this belief are thus given by Keil, who attributes the authorship to Ezra :—“The great affinity in language, the frequent references made to the law in similar formulas, the predilection for extended descriptions of the proceedings at acts of worship, along with the temple music and the songs of praise by the Levites, in standing liturgical formulas, also the predilection for genealogies and public registers—all of which are common to the two works—elevate this probability of common authorship into a certainty.”¹ But the same argument which proves the common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra is also applicable to the Book of Nehemiah, which in the Hebrew is, moreover, closely connected with the Book of Ezra, being described as a second part of the same work. It has, therefore, been concluded by Ewald and others that the three books form one complete history, by the same author. If this be so, it is pretty certain that this author was not Ezra or Nehemiah, but some one who lived long after, probably about the time of Alexander the Great: for though Ezra and Nehemiah are both allowed to speak at times in the first person, they are also spoken of in the third person; the days of Ezra and Nehemiah are, moreover, regarded as belonging to the past;² finally there are two genealogies, one in Chronicles and the other in Nehemiah, which would bring the date down to about the time which we have named. The one is the genealogy of the sons of Zerubbabel, which is brought down six generations after him.³ The other is the genealogy of the high priests, which is traced down five generations after

¹ Keil, *Introd.* § 142.

² Neh. xii. 26.

³ 1 Chron. iii. 17–24.

Joshua, the contemporary of Zerubbabel, and ends with Jaddua, who is supposed to have been the same that held office in the time of Alexander the Great.¹ Unless, therefore, we are to resort to the theory of later additions, we must suppose that the author of these books lived about the time mentioned above. There may also be some weight in the argument, that the description of Darius, the last king mentioned, as “the Persian” looks as if the Persian dynasty had been succeeded by another at the time when the book was written.² The late date of the Books of Chronicles is, moreover, confirmed by the place which they occupy in the Hebrew Canon.

Scope of the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

Different explanations have been offered of the method which the chronicler has pursued in his selections and omissions from the history of the kings. To those who separate the Book of Chronicles from the Book of Ezra, the facts of his commencing the detailed history after the reign of Saul, and omitting the kings of the ten tribes, at once suggest that his object was to write a history of the House of David. And this supposition is confirmed by the fact that he omits the most discreditable and calamitous incidents of David's reign, the murder of Uriah, David's adultery with Bathsheba, the rebellion of David's two sons, and the other parts of the history of Absalom ; and in the record of Solomon's reign passes over the king's declension into idolatry. Ewald, however, who looks upon the four books as one composition, reminds us that it was written at a time when the only representatives of the kingdom of the ten tribes were the hated Samaritans ;

¹ Neh. xii. 10, 11, 22. Compare Joseph. Ant. xi. 8.

² Neh. xii. 22.

when the interests of the Jews in the holy land had in fact almost shrunk within the limits of Jerusalem and its surroundings. Little remained of the ancient possessions of the people but their religion, and that had its seat in the Temple. Thus it is, he says, that the work is pre-eminently a history of Jerusalem only: the shortest and, at the same time, most accurate name for it would be Chronicle of Jerusalem, including in the history of Jerusalem the history of the religion which gave Jerusalem its greatness and its permanence. All this would explain why the kings of Israel are passed by, and why the history begins with David's removal to Jerusalem. The faults and follies of David and Solomon are, he thinks, omitted for another reason, namely, because these kings were, at the time when the book was written, the ideal heroes of antiquity.

Sacerdotal Bias of the Books of Chronicles.

In connexion with the subject considered in the preceding section, the following passage may be quoted from a note in the late Dean Milman's *History of the Jews* :—

“The Book of Kings is properly so called; it dwells chiefly on the succession of kings to the two thrones, the acts of the kings, their lives and their deaths. The books of Chronicles may be rather called the books of the High Priests, more especially those of the House of Zadok, the line of Eleazar. Throughout there is a sacerdotal bias: though relating the same events, and the same royal reigns, wherever power or influence may be attributed to the priesthood, it comes forth in the Chronicles into greater importance. Even in the life of David and of Solomon, Zadok the priest is more prominent; and this sacerdo-

talism becomes more manifest as the history darkens to its close. The reason of this seems to be simple. From its own internal evidence, and from its words, the book or books of Chronicles cannot have been written before the Captivity, not before the time of Ezra, to which they descend. But at that time the high priesthood was aspiring towards supremacy; it was gradually acquiring that kingly power which it afterwards assumed. The compiler, therefore, one perhaps of that order, would adopt that tradition, that version, or that colouring of events, which would give the sanction of antiquity or authority to these sacerdotal claims. This perhaps unconscious and hardly perceptible leaning does not necessarily imply either dishonesty or untruth. At that period the best and wisest Jews might look to the ascendancy of the religious power of the high priesthood as the only saving influence (especially while the nation was still under a foreign yoke). It was the only guarantee for the unity of the nation, which depended on the unity and therefore on the strength of the religion. The Temple (now that they had no king) was the true centre around which the tribes might gather; in which the Jewish life, and that which was the life of its life—the worship of Jehovah—might take refuge as in its last sanctuary, and work outwards, if not to the temporal, to the spiritual independence of the nation.”¹

Sources of the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

The advocates of the later date of authorship account for the occurrence of Nehemiah’s name at the beginning of the book relating to his time, and also for the use of the

¹ Milman: *Hist. Jews.* Book vii., note 1.

first person in some passages, in which the acts of Ezra and Nehemiah are recorded, by supposing that the later writer incorporated in his work portions of personal memoirs written by these leaders. The numerous genealogical tables found in all four books may also point to another source from which materials were derived. It would appear that such genealogical registers were carefully kept for taxation and other purposes.¹ We cannot say whether the genealogies in these books were copied directly from the original records, or taken from some earlier work, into which they had already been introduced. Some of the earlier of them are evidently the same that we have already met with in the Pentateuch and the following books, though in a slightly altered form. In the Books of Chronicles frequent mention is made of historical works relating to the reigns of the kings,² and also to works bearing the names of individual prophets, the "Words of Samuel the Seer, of Nathan the Prophet, of Gad the Seer," "the propheey of Ahijah the Shilonite,"³ and so on. It is quite uncertain what any of these works were. In two cases at least the prophetical writings referred to were contained in the historical works.⁴ The correspondence of many passages in the Books of Chronicles with passages in the Canonical Books of Kings at once suggests that the Books of Kings formed the foundation of the later history, and that they are the historical authorities to which reference is frequently made under the title

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv.: 1 Chron. v. 17; vii. 2; xxiii. 3, 27; xxvi. 31; xxvii. 23, 24: Ezra ii. 62: Neh. vii. 5, 64; xii. 23.

² 2 Chron. xvi. 11; xx. 34; xxv. 27; xxvii. 7; xxviii. 26; xxxii. 32; xxxiii. 18; xxxv. 27.

³ 1 Chron. xxix. 29, 30: 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xiii. 22; xx. 34; xxvi. 22; xxxii. 32; xxxiii. 18.

⁴ 2 Chron. xx. 34; xxxii. 32.

of "the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah," or other titles of similar import. But the deviations from the Books of Kings, not only in spirit, but even in statements of fact, are very marked. It must therefore be admitted that, if the chronicler used the Books of Kings as the foundation of his work, he used them with very great freedom. The difficulty is hardly escaped by supposing, with some authors, that he did not draw directly from the canonical Books of Kings, but that he used the same authorities as the writer of the earlier work. A few scholars have advocated the extreme view that the alleged authorities of the Chronicles had really no existence at all, and that he invented the history, as it suited his purpose. Without countenancing such a charge as this, we may say that, where the Books of Kings and Chronicles differ, the earlier history is undoubtedly to be preferred to the statements of the chronicler. The latter apparently threw back into the time of the kings the complete ceremonial and the religious feelings of his own time. Some of his numbers also are plainly too great.¹ But that is a fault which is not peculiar to him.

The Persian Kings mentioned in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The names of the Persian kings in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah will present an obvious difficulty to students of the Classics, who are familiar with the succession of Persian kings as given by Herodotus. The following table gives, on the left hand, the names of the Persian kings as they are to be found in the classical writers, and, on the

¹ 1 Chron. xxii. 14; xxix. 4, 7; 2 Chron. xiii. 3, 17; xiv. 8, 9; xvii. 14-19; xxviii. 8.

right hand, the names which we find in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the order in which they occur:—

| | PERSIAN KINGS, according to the Greek historians. | PERSIAN KINGS in Ezra and Nehemiah. |
|--------|--|--|
| B.C. | | |
| 558. | CYRUS. | CYRUS. |
| 529. | CAMBYES. | AHASUERUS. Ez. iv. 6. |
| 522. | PSEUDO-SMERDIS. | ARTAXERXES. Ez. iv. 7. |
| 521. | DARIUS (<i>Hystaspis</i>). | DARIUS. Ez. iv. 24, &c. |
| 486. | Xerxes. | |
| 465. | <i>Artaxerxes (Longimanus)</i> . | ARTAXERXES. Ez. vii. 1, &c. |
| 425-4. | <i>Darius (Nothus)</i> . | |
| 405. | <i>Artaxerxes (Mnemon)</i> . | |
| 359. | ARTAXERXES (<i>Ochus</i>). | |
| 338. | ARSES. | [22.] |
| 336. | DARIUS (<i>Codomannus</i>). | DARIUS the Persian (?). Neh. xii. |
| 331. | (Battle of Arbela). | |

It is strange that the names which follow the name of Cyrus in the right-hand column would, if moved down a little, correspond exactly with the names which are printed in italics in the left-hand column, for Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of Xerxes. But this would leave a gap between Cyrus and the following king, which the Scriptural writer cannot have intended. It is hard to believe that the compiler of the Book of Ezra could have confounded Darius Hystaspis with Darius Nothus, even though he lived under the Greek supremacy, and after the Persian rule had passed away. But the other alternatives that have been suggested are at least equally hard to accept. Ewald's solution of the difficulty is that by Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes the writer meant Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis. This is extremely unlikely. Almost equally

hard to believe is the explanation offered by Keil and others, that the section in the fourth chapter of Ezra, in which the names of Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes occur,¹ is not intended to describe what took place before the reign of Darius, but after it; that it is “an episode inserted by the historian for the sake of giving a short and comprehensive view of all the hostile acts against the Jewish community on the part of the Samaritans and surrounding nations.”²

Who was the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther?

On this subject also there has been considerable difference of opinion amongst scholars. The fact that the Book of Esther makes no mention of the Jews who had returned to Judaea, or of the Temple or the city of Jerusalem, has led some to suppose that the events related in this book must be placed in the period before the Return; and Ahasuerus has accordingly been identified with the Median king Cyaxares. But the kingdom described in the Book of Esther cannot be the Median, for the Median kingdom never extended “from India to Ethiopia.”³ Ahasuerus is probably the Persian Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. It has been thought by some scholars that this supposition derives support from the resemblance between the name of Esther and that of Amestris, the wife of Xerxes, whose revengful and bloodthirsty character appears in the stories related of her by Herodotus. One writer speaks of this as a “perilous” likeness. Another argues that Esther’s character may not have improved after her elevation to so high a station, and that the vengeance inflicted on Haman and his sons shows her

¹ Ezra iv. 6–22.

² Keil: Com. *in loc.*

Esth. i. 1.

vindictive disposition. It tends to shake our confidence in all these conjectural identifications of names, when we find another distinguished scholar asserting that the resemblance is, not between the names of Esther and Amestrus, but between Amestrus and Vashti, the queen who precedes Esther in the story.

Is the Book of Esther a History or a Romance?

The difficulty of settling the question about Ahasuerus is increased by our uncertainty as to the character of the book. We cannot be sure how far the story of Esther is founded on fact, or to what extent the writer of it may have drawn upon his imagination. Possibly the deciphering of the Eastern records may throw some light upon the matter. The way in which the book is connected with the feast of Purim can hardly be accepted as a proof of the truth of every particular related in it, as the book may have been written for the purpose of recommending the feast, or for reading at it. If the Jews are right in supposing that the term "Agagite" applied to Haman means that he was an Amalekite,¹ it would be a pretty clear proof of the fictitious nature of the narrative. But though Josephus adopts this interpretation, it is not at all certain that it is correct. The real meaning of the expression is not known.

The Bible and the Young.

From what we have said about the character of the Historical Books and the manner of their composition, the evils of a method of reading and teaching the Bible,

¹ Esth. iii. 1, &c. See 1 Sam. xv. 8, and Jos. Antiq. xi. vi. 5.

which, it is to be feared, is still only too common, will be evident. How often have children been drilled in the dry minutiae of these Old Testament narratives, the ages of the patriarchs, the names of their wives, the days and dates in the story of the Flood, and so on, as if they were learning tables of carefully compiled statistics! And how often have they been allowed to believe, if not actually taught, that these details are of equal importance with the great spiritual truths contained in the Bible, and that the knowledge of them brings with it some mysterious spiritual benefit! Need we add that the evils of this method of teaching the Bible are sometimes aggravated by ingenious attempts to reconcile discrepancies which undoubtedly exist in the text of the Bible, and to explain difficulties which cannot be explained. In the effort to effect these reconciliations, and to make the Books of the Old Testament conform to rules of historical composition, which were unknown when these books were written, the plain meaning of the text is often distorted and the interests of simple truth sacrificed. The *wunder* system turns away the thoughts of the learner from the more important things to these historical details; and the practice of perverse ingenuity cultivates a habit of intellectual dishonesty, and insensibly alienates the mind from the moral and spiritual truths with which such methods of interpretation are unfortunately associated. On the difficult question of teaching these books to the young, may we be allowed to suggest that it will be best to treat the great spiritual and moral truths which are to be learned from them as the things of real importance, and to allow the details of the narratives to fall into a subordinate place? It need not lessen the appreciation of the religious truths, but should rather increase it, when we see that they

found an echo in the human heart and conscience, even in those early days when men were so backward and ignorant in many things, and even when their power of apprehending these great truths was so imperfect, and their conceptions of them mixed with error. The truth that the world could not have made itself, that it could not have grown up out of nothing, that no account of its origin can be given better than that "in the beginning" God made it—this truth is not the less true, but our conviction of it is infinitely increased when we observe that, by the grace of God, it was patent to the minds of the great and good men of former days, even though their ideas of the process by which the world must have arrived at its present state were somewhat different from those which the more accurate investigations of modern science have proposed for our acceptance. The story of the Fall—whatever we think now of the origin and first meaning of it, whether we believe that it was intended from the first to be understood figuratively or not—bears witness to the great law, to which common experience also bears such abundant testimony, that the consequences of wrong-doing do not end with the evil-doer, but spread in an ever-widening circle; and shows that men felt long ago, as we feel now, the essential imperfection of human nature and the "something wrong about this world" with which man has to struggle in pain and sorrow until the final enfranchisement from sin and evil, to which he has been taught to look forward as his true goal. From the accounts of the great flood we may, in like manner, at the very least learn this, how the conscience of man has led him to see in the great convulsions of nature the Divine judgment on the sins of the earth; and the value of this lesson remains, even though we do not always interpret providence now

in exactly the same way as our forefathers did. Finally, the examples of bravery, of goodness, of devotion to the service of God, which are presented to us in the lives of the men and women of old time, are, not less but more, valuable to us, because we see that the persons who exhibited these virtues were people of like passions with ourselves, by whom God teaches us, as He does by the men and women of our own day, to recognize the heavenly treasure even in an earthly vessel, and ever to follow that which is good. By thus drawing special attention to those things in the Bible to which reason and conscience bear independent testimony, we shall both impress these truths themselves upon the minds of the young, and secure that their attachment to the Bible shall be built upon a foundation which cannot be shaken.

PART II.

THE POETICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

Hebrew Poetry.

THE reader must not expect to find in the Hebrew poems either the rhymes or accents of English poetry, or the classical metres. Nothing like any of these is to be found either in the Hebrew original or in the authorized English translation.¹ English readers are sometimes apt to think that we cannot have poetry without rhyme, or at least without metre; because they become accustomed to one or both of these in the poems with which they first make acquaintance. But this is a mistake. The use of any peculiar form or mode of expression is not essential to poetry. The essence of poetry consists in the spirit by which it is animated. At the same time, it is usual for poetry in all languages to assume some special form of

¹ Instances are sometimes found of *assonance*, that is, the concurrence of words resembling each other in sound. But this occurs only occasionally, as it may occur in oratorical prose; and cannot be considered a general characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

its own, by which it is distinguished from prose, and by which its effect upon the mind is assisted. In Hebrew poetry there is such a form, though it is not like any to which we have become accustomed elsewhere. It consists in parallelism, that is, the repetition of the same or similar sentiments in sentences which also correspond more or less with each other in construction. Something like this is occasionally to be found in English poetry, as, for instance, in the following verses:—

“ When the dark waves round us roll,
And we look in vain for aid,
Speak, Lord, to the trembling soul,
‘ It is I; be not afraid.’ ”

When our brightest hopes depart,
When our fairest visions fade,
Whisper to the fainting heart,
‘ It is I; be not afraid.’ ”

Here it will be noticed that there is a close correspondence between the two lines of each couplet. This correspondence depends on the resemblance, or other relation, between the thoughts expressed in the lines; and in the third couplet—

“ When our brightest hopes depart,
When our fairest visions fade”—

it amounts to an actual repetition of the same thought in two sentences of the same construction, and almost in the same words. Many of the parallelisms in Hebrew poetry are equally distinct and complete. The second Psalm, for instance, begins thus:—

“ Why do the heathen so furiously rage together:
And why do the people imagine a vain thing? ”

The kings of the earth stand up,
And the rulers take counsel together :

Against the Lord,
And against his Anointed.”

Take another example from Psalm cxliv. :—

“ Lord, what is man that thou hast such respect unto him :
Or the son of man that thou so regardest him ?

Man is like a thing of nought :
His time passeth away like a shadow.”

It is easy to see how the parallelism aids the effect of the poem in all these instances. The corresponding lengths of the lines, or sentences, with the natural pause at the end of each, give rest to the mind, while the repetition of the thought leaves it full time to produce its proper effect upon the feelings. The parallelism in the poetical books of the Bible is not always so simple or so clearly marked as in the examples given above. It is sometimes found in more complicated combinations ; it is repeated more than once, or it occurs alternately, or in some other order. But no definite rules can be laid down ; and, in fact, nothing is known on the subject beyond what the reader can observe for himself. Sometimes the parallelism becomes so indefinite that it is hard to say whether it exists at all or not ; it gradually fades away, and, as far as form is concerned, the poetry becomes ordinary prose.

Both in the poetical and other books of the Old Testament there are frequent allusions to music, which appears to have been much cultivated by the Hebrews, especially in connexion with religious worship. But little or nothing is known of the nature of Hebrew music, beyond the names of some of the instruments. We may, however, conjecture

that it resembled the music of Egypt and of other neighbouring countries.

The Book of Job.

This Book is a dramatic composition, relating the sufferings and trials of Job, an Arabian chief, and introducing a discussion on the subject of human suffering. When we call it dramatic, we do not mean that it was intended for representation on a stage. There is no trace of anything like theatrical representations having been in use among the Hebrews.¹ We only mean that several speakers are introduced who engage in conversation with each other. The outline of the story is as follows :—

Job was a good man “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Even in the Divine estimate there was “none like him in the earth.” He was also a prosperous man, highly blessed in his family and his possessions, and universally respected by all about him. This prosperity leads the accusing angel to suggest that Job does not “fear God for nought,” that his apparent piety is simply due to his prosperity, and that if his lot were changed he would appear in a different character; though he be now so religious and circumspect in word and deed, if he met with misfortune like other folk he would curse God to His face. To meet this taunt of the enemy, the Almighty allows His servant Job to be tried. One after another the strokes of adversity fall upon him in terrible succession. His flocks and herds, the source of his wealth, are carried off by bands of marauders, or destroyed by fire from heaven. His faithful servants die in defence

¹ It is a mere conjecture that the Song of Solomon was intended for stage representation. See p. 202.

of their master's property, or perish by the visitation of God. His ten children, the pride of his heart, are taken from him in one day. But the good man sins not, nor charges God foolishly. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb," is his only cry, "and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Then the tempter obtains permission to add acute bodily suffering to Job's other misfortunes. He is afflicted with a most painful disease, and sits upon the ground a miserable and loathsome object. To complete the trial, his wife's faith entirely breaks down. She begs her husband to "curse God, and die." But Job sins not with his lips;—"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Three of Job's friends make "an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him." Their arrival touches the heart of the afflicted man, and occasions a passionate outburst of grief and perplexity. He curses the day of his birth, he asks why was he ever born, or why did he not die in infancy before these troubles had come; then he should have been at peace, in that silent darkness where all have rest. These complaints, in which Job appears to lose his former self-control, lead to an earnest conversation between him and his friends. Their discussion runs on through many chapters, and with the concluding speeches evidently forms the pith of the book. Parts of the dialogue are obscure, and there is some uncertainty as to the minor turns of thought, but the broad outline of the whole is pretty clear. One of the comforters, Eliphaz the Temanite, begins by laying down the principle that all suffering comes as a chastisement for

sin ; Job must therefore have been guilty of some wickedness, to give occasion for this calamity ; if he will acknowledge his fault and accept the Divine correction, his former happiness will be restored. But Job can find no comfort in this reasoning. He complains of the worthlessness of such attempts at consolation, and renews his lamentations. Then Bildad the Shuhite, another of the three visitors, joins in, taking the same ground as Eliphaz ; and so the discussion goes on, Job continuing to assert his innocence—at least his innocence of any such exceptional wickedness as the theory of his three friends would imply ; the friends, on the other hand, clinging to their first idea, and in the end, losing temper with Job's obstinate justification of himself, and plainly hinting that his conduct must be due to hypocrisy and wilful rebellion against the Almighty. When it becomes evident that no satisfactory result can be expected from this controversy, a new character appears upon the scene, Elihu the son of Barachel, a young man, whose name has not been previously mentioned, and who describes himself as having listened, at first in expectation, but in the end with bitter disappointment, to the speeches of his elders. Elihu condemns Job because “ he justified himself rather than God,” that is, because he was too eager and hasty in putting forward the plea of his own innocence, and did not rather occupy himself with the reflection that the Almighty may have had good purposes in the infliction of suffering—purposes beneficial even to the sufferer. Elihu also reproves the three friends. Their narrow philosophy was “ no answer ” to the anguished cry of Job’s afflicted soul. But so great a cause needs a higher arbiter, and in a passage of extreme grandeur the Almighty is described as manifesting Himself to Job. In that awful Presence—the Presence which is manifest in all creation

for those who have eyes to see it, and the heart to feel it—Job's troubled soul is completely subdued. He complains no more. He has no mind to rebel against the dispensations of that Being in whose Presence he feels himself unfit to stand. The Almighty also approves Elihu's judgment of the vain attempt of Job's friends to make their petty maxims the measure of His dealings. They had been guilty of "folly," and had not spoken of Him the thing which was right. However Job intercedes for his friends, and their error is pardoned. The book concludes with an account of the complete restoration of Job's prosperity, and the doubling of his former possessions.

Was Job a Real or an Imaginary Character ?

The poetical justice with which Job is treated when his trial is over is of itself sufficient to show that we cannot regard the book as strictly historical. The family with which he was blessed after his restoration was exactly the same as that which he had possessed before his trial. His other possessions were exactly doubled. In place of "seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses," he received "fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses." Moreover, we are told that he lived one hundred and forty years to enjoy his recovered happiness, though he had been old enough to be the father of a grown up family before his trial. But while there can be no doubt of the poetical character of the present narrative, it is not likely that the whole story of Job was a pure invention. There is a reference to Job in the Book of Ezekiel in which he seems to be regarded as a real historical charac-

ter.¹ It is probable, therefore, that the writer of the present book worked upon some traditional remembrances of a real person. This, or something like it, would appear to have been the opinion of Luther, though he has expressed himself in rather awkward language. “I look upon the Book of Job,” he said, “as a true history, yet I do not believe that all took place just as it is written, but that an ingenious, pious, and learned man brought it into its present form.”

Authorship and Date of the Book of Job.

We are quite unable to say who was the author of the Book of Job, or where or when it was written. The quaint note in the margin of the English Bible, which says that “*Moses* is thought to have wrote the Book of *Job* whilst among the *Madianites*, Before Christ *cir.* 1520,” expresses only one opinion out of many on the subject, and one which at present does not find much favour among scholars.

Literary Estimate of the Book of Job.

Whoever was the author of the book, its literary excellence has been acknowledged by the highest authorities. Edmund Burke, in his *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, quotes the description, in the first chapter, of the messengers arriving one after another with the tidings of Job’s successive calamities, as a notable instance of the powerful effect which may be produced by the simple repetition of similar impressive incidents. He compares the effect of the passage to that produced by a succession of solemn sounds, such as the tolling of a funeral bell, or the booming of heavy artillery at regular intervals over a battle-

¹ Ezek. xiv. 14, &c.

field. The narrative portions, the one at the beginning of the book which contains the passage to which Burke refers, and the other at the end, both together forming the framework in which the discourses are set, are not poetical in form. At least they do not display that peculiarity of parallelism which we have mentioned as a distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew poetry. It is only in the discourses that the parallelism appears. The descriptions of nature and natural objects as exhibiting the power and majesty of the Almighty, which frequently occur in these discourses, are especially remarkable. Some of them cannot be surpassed for grandeur. This feature of the book is noticed in the following extract from Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes* :—"I call that"—the Book of Job—"apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book; all men's Book! It is our first oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation. There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true every way; true eyesight and vision for all things, material things no less than spiritual: the horse—'hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?'—he 'laughs at the shaking of the spear.' Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind—so soft, and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit."

With what object was the Book of Job written?

A great deal has been written upon this subject, and many speculations may be found in the commentaries as to the object which the writer of the Book of Job had in view. Instead of entering here into these doubtful inquiries as to what the writer intended his book to teach, perhaps it will be more profitable for us to remind the reader of some things which the book does unquestionably teach.

In the first place, then, when it pictures Job, as it does in the opening narrative, retaining his faith in God in spite of adversity, it reminds us that in all ages and countries, and under different circumstances, men have been found to do the same. This fact effectually disposes of the taunt against religion implied in the tempter's question, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" Religious faith, whatever may be the true account of its origin, is not, as some have said, merely prudence under another name. It is not a selfish satisfaction with one's own welfare, hypocritically assuming the garb of religion. It is something quite distinct from prudence, something deep down in the human mind which clings to the thought of God, and retains faith in God in spite of all changes in external circumstances. It is true that it may sometimes fail, true that external circumstances may sometimes prove too much for it, true that it oftentimes connects itself with errors of thought and imperfect standards of morality; but still, in spite of all this, there it is, something that cannot be denied, and that must receive due recognition in any philosophy of human nature or human destiny that expects to be considered at all worthy of the name.

In the second place, the Book of Job condemns the

assumption, upon which Job's friends argued, that suffering is inflicted only as a consequence of wrong-doing, so that the wickedness of the sufferer may be measured by the amount of his suffering. Suffering has other objects to accomplish besides those of punishment and correction. This truth may be plain enough to us now, but it has not always been so to everyone. Even in the Book of Psalms we shall find the writers sometimes struggling with the difficulties caused by an imperfect apprehension of it.

Lastly, the account of Job's complete submission in the presence of the Almighty reminds us that, though our minds are sometimes disturbed and lose their balance; and though the understanding must be always at a loss to explain the mysteries of life, there is a Voice which reaches the soul of man through the manifestations of the Deity which surround him, a Voice which can calm the soul even in the midst of perplexity and trial, and which invites an unmurmuring submission to the irresistible decrees of Providence—"All those things"—the heavens and the earth—"hath mine hand made, and so all these things arose: but on this man will I look, even on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word."

Side Lessons from the Book of Job.

Three admirable remarks are appended to the section on the Book of Job in Nicholls' *Help to the Reading of the Bible*:—

"1. Let the young imitate Elihu's humility. Though competent to speak best, he spoke last.

"2. How much of heavenly wisdom is necessary to conduct controversy properly, when even Job failed in it!

"3. It well becomes us to confess ourselves to be miserable offenders, when even Job abhorred himself, and said, 'Behold, I am vile.' He who knows himself best esteems himself least."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PSALMS.

The Psalms in the Jewish and Christian Churches.

THE Book of Psalms is a collection of one hundred and fifty sacred poems. It was the Psalm-book of the Jewish Temple, and is still used in the public and private devotions of the ancient people amongst whom it had its origin. The modern Jewish use of the Psalms is thus described by one of themselves :—“The Psalms are embodied in every portion of our religious service,” and “in private prayer in our family circle, when we rise up, and when we lie down; when we dedicate our house on entering it; when a family is seated around the table; when we hail the coming in of the Sabbath, and as we watch the departure of the holy day; when life has left our loved ones, and we deposit their remains in their last resting-place, and when we place over that last home a slab recording their name, we read Psalms; for in that glorious book of poesy we find words appropriate to the occasion.”

The Christian use of the Psalms, both in the public offices of the Church and as a manual of private devotion, can be traced back to a very early date. It is probable that both uses were adopted from the Jewish Church at the very first. In the liturgies of the Greek and Roman Churches the Psalms are employed to the same extent as in that of the Church of England.

An Evidence of Religion.

The general response which these devotional poems have met with from the hearts of so large a portion of mankind, through many ages, and in varying conditions of society, is a most remarkable fact in the history of the human mind, and is in itself no small evidence of the truth of Religion.

*The Different Versions of the Psalms in the Bible
and in the Prayer-book.*

To most English readers the Psalms are much better known in the Prayer-book Version than in that contained in the Bible. The Prayer-book Version is the older of the two, being the version of "Cranmer's Great Bible," which was published in the year 1539. Cranmer's Bible was only an improved edition of Coverdale's Bible, a translation which had been made a few years before; and in Coverdale's Bible the Psalms were not translated directly from the Hebrew. They were taken from a Latin version of the Psalms which was in use in the Gallican Church, and is known as the Gallican Psalter. The version of the Psalms now contained in the Bible is part of the translation made "out of the original sacred tongues" by order of James I. in the year 1610. It is more critically accurate than the Prayer-book Version, and may be sometimes found of use in ascertaining the true meaning of the Hebrew, when it is not correctly given in the other. But the Prayer-book Version has never been superseded by any later translation either in the public services of the Church or in the hearts of the people. It is more rhythmical, and therefore better adapted for singing than the Bible translation. It is moreover now secured in its place by many old associations.

Origin of the Psalter.

In the Prayer-book the Psalms are called “The Psalms of David.” This is a very ancient description of them; but we are not to infer from it that they were all written by “the sweet Psalmist of Israel,” or that the collection was completed in his time. Some of the Psalms obviously belong to a date long subsequent to the reign of David; Psalm cxxxvii., for example, which relates the sorrows of the people “by the waters of Babylon.” Many others are as late, if not later still. There may also be some Psalms in the collection which are earlier than David’s day. We cannot give any weight to the heading of the ninetieth Psalm, which describes it as “a prayer of Moses”; but there are interwoven with the historical narrative specimens of poetical composition, some of which are evidently of great antiquity. It is, no doubt, because the Hebrew Psalter owes its existence to the impulse which David gave to the practice of sacred song, and perhaps because some hymns actually composed by him formed the nucleus of the collection, that it bears his name. The superscriptions in the Hebrew Bible which ascribe seventy-three of them to him cannot be relied on. Many scholars are, however, agreed as to his authorship of a smaller number. It is not impossible that a collection of Psalms containing some of his composition may have been made for use in the service of the Tabernacle or of the Temple, and that this collection was the basis of our present Psalter, later additions having been made to it, and rearrangements of the whole having taken place from time to time.¹ Hezekiah,

¹ Some scholars now doubt David’s authorship of any of the Psalms. They are of opinion that the Psalms generally represent a later religious

when re-arranging the services of the Temple, is said to have “commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer.”¹

The present collection is marked off into five divisions by doxologies, which occur at the end of each.² These five divisions are sometimes called the Five Books of the Psalms.

Personal and National Elements in the Psalms.

Some of the Psalms are purely personal in their reference. They express the joys and sorrows, the struggles and aspirations of the individual soul of the writer. Others have for their subject the fortunes and hopes of the Jewish community. But it is so natural for the personal and national elements to run together, that it is impossible sharply to divide the Psalms into two classes in this respect, as it is in any other classification which has been proposed. Psalm cii. may be quoted as a beautiful instance of the intermingling of the individual and national sentiments. It is evidently written by a Jew of the Captivity in Babylon. Harassed and heartbroken, the mourning exile pours forth the sorrows that oppress him. His

standpoint than the time of David or Solomon. See Kuenen, *Rel. of Is.*, vol. i., p. 322. It is evident that once we acknowledge that we cannot rely upon the titles of the Psalms, we have no certain rule left by which we can determine the authorship. The Psalms which Ewald on internal grounds attributes to David are the following—Psalms ii., iii., iv., vii., viii., xi., xv., xviii., xix., xxii., xxxii., lx. 6–8 (cxviii. 7–10), cii., cx., cxliv. 12–15; to which he adds 2 Sam. i. 19–27; iii. 33, 34; xxiii. 1–7. Examples of Psalms most commonly supposed to belong to the Maccabaean period are—Psalms xlix., lx., lxxiv., lxxix.

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 30.

² See Pss. xli. 13; lxviii. 35; lxxxix. 52; civ. 35; cl.

life is passing away in pain and sorrow. He cannot live to see the restoration to Jerusalem, which seems even now close at hand. But he rests on the thought of God's Eternity and Faithfulness, and consoles himself with the hope that, after he is gone, the Lord will revive the fortunes of His people, and restore His worship, as of old :—

“ My days are gone like a shadow :
And I am withered like grass.

But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever :
And Thy remembrance throughout all generations.

Thou shalt arise,
And have mercy upon Zion :

For it is time that Thou have mercy upon her ;
Yea, the time is come.

For Thy servants think upon her stones,
And it pitied them to see her in the dust.

The heathen shall fear Thy name, O Lord :
And all the kings of the earth Thy majesty ;

When the Lord shall build up Zion :
And when His glory shall appear.

• • • • • . . .
The children of Thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall stand fast in Thy sight.”

It is not often that the internal evidence of a Psalm points so clearly to the date and circumstances of the writer as in this case. But our uncertainty as to matters of this sort need not interfere with our devotional use of the Psalms. Whoever the writers were, whenever or wherever they lived, they were men of like passions with ourselves, contending with the same kind of trials and temptations that we have to contend with, and by the

grace of God maintaining, with more or less of effort, their faith in the great Truths of Religion.

Faith Militant.

Oeeasionally we find the writers of the Psalms struggling with the same kind of difficulty as that with which the soul of Job was perplexed. The seventy-third Psalm states very distinctly the trial of faith arising from the apparent injustice of the distribution of happiness and prosperity in life :—

“ My feet were almost gone :
My treadings had well nigh slipt.

And why ? I was grieved at the wicked :
I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity.

For they are in no peril of death :
But are lusty and strong.

They come in no misfortune like other folk :
Neither are they plagued like other men.

And this is the cause that pride is as a chain around their neck :
And cruelty encompasses them like a garment.
• • • • • • • •

Lo, these are the ungodly,
These prosper in the world,
And these have riches in possession :

And I said,
Then have I cleansed my heart in vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.

All the day long have I been punished,
And chastened every morning.”

It is only when the mind of the Psalmist is calmed and elevated by communion with God that he can throw these doubts aside. Then he can understand the worthlessness

of that prosperity that is “without God in the world.” Then he sees that what the Almighty has to give to those who love Him is something better than the uncertain possessions of earth :—

“ Then thought I to understand this :
 But it was too hard for me,

 Until I went into the sanctuary of God :
 Then understood I the end of these men ;

 Namely, how Thou dost set them in slippery places :
 And castest them down, and destroyest them.

 O how suddenly do they consume :
 Perish, and come to a fearful end !

 So foolish was I, and ignorant :
 Even as it were a beast before Thee.

 Nevertheless I am always by Thee :
 For Thou hast holden me by my right hand.

 Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel :
 And after that receive me with glory.

 Whom have I in heaven but Thee :
 And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.

 My flesh and my heart faileth :
 But God is the strength of my heart,
 And my portion for ever.”

This Psalm appears to be one of the few in which the writer arrives at the thought of a future existence as the key to some of the mysteries of this life. In another Psalm in which the writer maintains, against the same appearances to the contrary that are stated in the seventy-third, that

“ A small thing that the righteous hath :
 Is better than great riches of the ungodly,”

he seems to depend altogether on the certainty that goodness would ultimately meet with success in this life.¹ His conviction that righteousness would be ultimately justified in some way or another is not the less valuable to us because we may not now expect to see the justification come about in exactly the way in which he expected.

Faith Triumphant and Unclouded.

It would leave a wrong impression of the Psalms if we did not, after speaking of those in which faith appears contending with difficulties, recall to the mind of the reader how many there are of a different character. The hundredth Psalm, for instance, is a type of many in which all the enemies of faith are beaten down. They are trampled under foot in exulting triumph. They are as if they had never been.

“ O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands :
 Serve the Lord with gladness,
 And come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord He is God :
 It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves ;
 We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving,
 And into His courts with praise :
 Be thankful unto Him,
 And speak good of His Name.

For the Lord is gracious,
 His mercy is everlasting :
 And His truth endureth
 From generation to generation.”

¹ Ps. xxxvii.

In others, again, there is no thought or hint of any difficulty in believing. Such is the twenty-third Psalm, in which, as in many others, the voice of faith is calm and clear, like the light of a summer evening:—

“The Lord is my Shepherd :
Therefore can I lack nothing.”

Of such faith the one aspiration is that its sweetness may be shared everlastingly by all:—

“ O Israel,
Trust in the Lord :
From this time forth,
For evermore.”

Unforgiving Spirit of some of the Psalms.

It has been a sore puzzle to many persons that the writers of some of the Psalms should exhibit so much bitterness of feeling against their personal and national enemies. But we must remember that the writers of these Psalms were but men, and men belonging to an age in which the Christian law of forgiveness had not been preached. Is it any wonder that in their utterances, lofty and spiritual though they are in the main, we should occasionally find traces of imperfect human feeling? Would not the wonder really be if any such collection of human compositions were found to be quite free from imperfection? At the same time, before we pronounce final judgment on the utterances in question, we should consider carefully to what extent the feelings, to which exception has been taken, are to be condemned.

Because it is one of the special glories of Christianity to have brought into due recognition the value of the milder virtues, there is a tendency in the minds of many persons to assume that they, and they alone, constitute the whole of goodness. But this is a great mistake. Zeal for right, and indignation against wrong, are also parts of the highest goodness, as they were of the character of Jesus Christ.¹ The man who fails in them fails as really and as badly as the man who fails in gentleness or in forgiveness of injuries. In judging, therefore, of the expressions which are used in the Psalms about enemies, we should bear in mind that righteous indignation against evil may have been a great part, if not all, of the feeling that dictated them ; that the Psalmists may have had good reason for seeing in the enemies of Israel, or even of themselves, the enemies of God.

“By the Waters of Babylon.”

The feelings with which some of the writers of the Psalms may have regarded the enemies of Israel are well described in the following passage relating to the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm—“Even though we acknowledge that his words are too bitter and cruel, and are forced to condemn his prayers for revenge, we cannot but feel that it was not the worst kind of Jew who wrote this Psalm. Ignorant he may have been ; passionate and revengeful, and perhaps even cruel, he was. These were the faults of his day, and of days long after his. But with

¹ See, for instance, Matt. xxiii. Comp. John ii. 17.

all this there was something noble and touching in his grief—something of that living faith that saved in Babylon a remnant to return seventy years later. There were other Jews by the waters of Babylon more sordid and less passionate, who soon forgot their country's injuries, and lost their home-sickness for Zion; who mingled with their heathen captors, ate their food, married their daughters, built houses, traded, and made homes; easily consoling themselves in the present, and forgetting as quickly as possible the glories and misfortunes of the past. Quick-witted, worldly-wise, and soft-spoken men, who soon forgot the songs of Zion, and learned those of Babylon instead, and who accordingly prospered in captivity, and, prospering, sunk into the stream of heathenism. For them Babylon was no place of penance, nor had Jerusalem a sacred meaning. They ceased to be God's people. It was only those ‘irreconcileables’ who nursed still the love of their own land, and said in their impassioned grief, ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth’; who, when the time of deliverance came, had the courage and the faith to leave the riches and the pleasures of Babylon, to brave the long and dangerous journey, and to settle in a land for so many years forsaken, there to build up the holy city slowly and painfully amid the ridicule of their enemies, and to set up again the Temple, though so poor, so shorn of its ancient glory, so mean in comparison with that of days gone by, that even in the joy of consecration they could not but weep at the contrast.”¹

¹ See a pamphlet on *The Vindictive Psalms*, p. 42, by the Rev. Canon Sherleek. (Dublin: Hedges & Smith.)

The Psalter as a Modern Book of Devotion.

It may be freely admitted that there are some disadvantages attending the use of the Hebrew Psalter as a modern book of devotion. In a collection of Psalms made so long ago under an earlier religious dispensation, and in a state of society differing in many respects from our own, it is to be expected that there should occur occasional passages that are obscure or unintelligible; and that some thoughts and expressions should be found which are in themselves unsuitable to the religion of the present day. But on the other hand there is a great counter-balancing gain in the use of a book with such historical associations as those of the Book of Psalms. It is a bond of union between our faith and the faith of other days, when we remember the origin of these words of prayer and praise which we can still use. Since they were first used many changes have taken place, the thoughts of men have widened, old ideas have passed away, and much new knowledge has been accepted. Our notions of duty, our standards of right and wrong may not always be the notions and the standards of the age and country in which the Psalms were first produced. Our anticipations of the ways in which the providence of God will vindicate itself may not be in all respects the same as those of the Psalmists appear to have been. But at heart we are one with them. Like them, we feel called to battle for right and truth. Like them, we know what it is to be wearied with the burden of our own sin. Still, as of old, the spirit of man leans for rest upon the Eternal and the Infinite, and finds in communion with God the satisfaction of its deepest wants. Thus, across the ages,

"Brother clasps the hand of brother,"

and thus, in the deepest and best sense, it is true that our faith and the faith of the fathers are one :

“ One the object of our journey,
One the Faith which which never tires,
One the earnest looking forward,
One the Hope our God inspires.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND THE SONG OF
SOLOMON.

The Book of Proverbs.

THIS Book is not merely a collection of those short, pithy sayings which we call proverbs. It does certainly contain a number of such sayings; but the Hebrew word (*mashal*) which gives its title to the book is one of wider signification than the English word by which it is translated in the present instance. It is the word which is used of one of Balaam's prophecies and of some of the speeches in the Book of Job, being in those cases translated "parable" in the English Version.¹ The present book includes in its contents some short sententious poems. The materials of which it is composed appear to have been derived from different sources. Like the Books of the Law and the Psalms, it is divisible into five parts, as follows:—

PROV. I-IX.

A series of addresses in which the praise of Wisdom is celebrated, and the young are exhorted to follow her footsteps. At the head of this section stands the title "*The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel,*" followed by a short statement of the objects of the succeeding composition. This title and description may apply either to the whole book or to this division of it.

PROV. X-XXIV.

"*The Proverbs of Solomon,*" These chapters consist almost entirely of proverbs in our sense of the word, each proverb being

¹ Num. xxiii. 7-10; Job xxvii. 1.

contained in one verse, and being expressed in two parts. From verse 17 of chapter xxii. to the end of the section the composition is, however, of a more connected character. A short appendix is attached by the words "*These things also belong to the wise.*"¹

PROV. XXV.—XXIX.

Additional "*Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out.*"

PROV. XXX.

"*The words of Agur the son of Jakeh.*" A collection of wise thoughts. It is not known who Agur the son of Jakeh was.

PROV. XXXI.

"*The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.*" Another collection like the preceding. King Lemuel is also an unknown personage. The fine description of a virtuous woman in this chapter is, like some of the Psalms, an alphabetical acrostic in the original.

Solomon and the Book of Proverbs.

From the way in which Solomon's name is connected with this book, it is probable that the wise king did for proverbial philosophy what his father did for psalmody, and that the Book of Proverbs originated from a collection of proverbial sayings which he uttered, or collected, or perhaps both. In the Book of Kings he is said to have spoken "three thousand proverbs."²

The Wisdom of the Proverbs.

It has been well said that the presence of the Book of Proverbs in the Bible is a standing reminder of the place

¹ Prov. xxiv. 23.

² 1 Kings iv. 32.

which prudence and common sense with respect to the affairs of every-day life ought to hold in practical religion. It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that the wisdom which is the subject of the Book of Proverbs is only prudence in the lower sense of that word. The wise man applies his intelligence and foresight to every concern and interest of life; but he remembers that without religious principle the highest wisdom cannot exist. The heart which is enlightened by the Spirit of God with the love of goodness and truth, and which fears to do evil, is the truly understanding heart. The key-note of the Book of Proverbs is to be found in the saying which is frequently repeated in different forms:—

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom :
And the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

It is impossible by means of a few extracts to give any idea of the manifold contents of the Book of Proverbs, of its high principles, its practical common sense, its extensive observation of life, its wide sympathies, its occasional gleams of humour; but the following characteristic examples will show what the Hebrew proverbs are like, and may induce some readers, who are not already acquainted with this book, to search further for themselves in the mine from which these are taken:—

“The lip of truth shall be established for ever :
But a lying tongue is but for a moment.”

“ He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker :
But he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor.”

“ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ;
And there is that willeth thine more than is meet,
But it tendeth to poverty.”

- “ Say not unto thy neighbour,
 Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give :
 When thou hast it by thee.”
- “ A faithful man shall abound with blessings :
 But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.”
- “ Where no oxen are the crib is clean :
 But much increase is by the strength of the ox.”
- “ The slothful man saith, There is a lion without,
 I shall be slain in the streets.”
- “ Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging :
 And whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”
- “ It is an honour for a man to cease from strife :
 But every fool will be meddling.”
- “ A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,
 And a rod for the fool’s back.”
- “ It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer :
 But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.”
- “ He that is despised and hath a servant,
 Is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.”
- “ Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop :
 But a good word maketh it glad.”
- “ A man that hath friends must show himself friendly :
 And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”
- “ As in water face answereth to face,
 So the heart of man to man.”
- “ As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
 So is a man that wandereth from his place.”
- “ A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not :
 But knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.”
- “ Righteousness exalteth a nation :
 But sin is a reproach to any people.”
- “ The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
 Beholding the evil and the good.”

Of the longer passages the following will perhaps be the most appropriate for quotation, though it is hard to select :—

“ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,
And the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies:
And all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Length of days is in her right hand :
And in her left hand riches and honour.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her :
And happy is every one that retaineth her.

The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth ;
By understanding hath He established the Heavens.

By His knowledge the depths are broken up,
And the clouds drop down the dew.”

Ecclesiastes.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a composition of somewhat the same nature as the Book of Job. It is written in the person of Solomon, “ the sad and splendid ” king, and describes his search for real satisfaction through all the ways of life. After failing in all, finding everywhere only “ vanity and vexation of spirit,” he comes at last to the conclusion of the whole matter that it is not for us to understand the mysteries of life, that to “ fear God and keep His commandments ” is the whole duty of man.

Searching for Wisdom.

The Book of Ecclesiastes contains many proverbial sayings which remind us of the Book of Proverbs, and some remarkable and striking passages. But it is not possible to trace, with any degree of confidence, a continuous thread of thought running through it. Until we come close to the end of the book, the writer seems to wander incomprehensibly from one subject to another. At one time he seems to contradict the conclusions at which he has just arrived; at another, he stops short just as we think that he is coming to the discovery for which he is looking. As we read it we seem to be travelling on a road richly strewn with brilliant fragments of knowledge and wisdom. But they are only fragments, partial imperfect fragments; and the road itself, after many windings and doublings, seems to leave us again at the same point from which we started. The successive chapters read like a collection of extracts from the common-place book of some serious and thoughtful man, looking at life with eyes of anxious observation, and jotting down from day to day the various thoughts that occur to him, but, for a long time at least, arriving at no certain or definite conclusion from it all. Perhaps it will be wisest for us, without troubling ourselves about critical questions, to see in all this the picture of a man looking for his way through life. To-day he sees one truth clearly; to-morrow he sees another. Sometimes the partial knowledge of to-day appears to conflict with the impressions of yesterday. Often he comes round and crosses his old track, or finds himself unexpectedly tracing his former footsteps. Gleams of light clear and strong are ever flashing upon him, but they are only gleams, broken and unsatisfactory, until at last he finds the true Light of Life.

Solomon and the Book of Ecclesiastes.

It is not now generally supposed that Solomon really wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, but that it was composed by some later author in his name. It would appear that at the time when it was written the material splendour of Solomon's reign—so different from the spiritual excellency which is associated with the name of his father—so suddenly to vanish away on the break-up of the kingdom at his death, was already recognized as the type of the mere earthly glory that has in it no element of permanency and no power of affording real satisfaction. This was the view which Our Lord took of it when He said that “Solomon in all his glory” was not to be compared with the lilies of the field.

Our Earthly House of this Tabernacle.

As an example of the style of the more connected parts of the Book of Ecclesiastes, we may quote the well-known passage on the importance of using life rightly while the powers of mind and body are at their best, and before the feebleness and decay of old age come on :—

“ Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth :
 And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,
 And walk in the ways of thine heart,
 And in the sight of thine eyes :
 But know thou,
 That for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.
 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,
 And put away evil from thy flesh :
 For childhood and youth are vanity.”

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
While the evil days come not,
Nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened,
Nor the clouds return after the rain :
In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
And the strong men shall bow themselves,
And the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look out of the windows be darkened,
And the doors shall be shut in the streets,
When the sound of the grinding is low,
And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird,
And all the daughters of musick shall be brought low ;
Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high,
And fears shall be in the way,
And the almond tree shall flourish,
And the grasshopper shall be a burden,
And desire shall fail :
Because man goeth to his long home,
And the mourners go about the streets :
Or ever the silver cord be loosed,
Or the golden bowl be broken,
Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the cistern.
Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:
And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The latter part of the above passage is generally interpreted as an allegory. According to this interpretation the house is the body, the dwelling-place of man's spirit. The keepers of the house are the hands, which tremble when old age comes on ; the strong men are the legs, the supporters of the body ; the eyes are the windows through which the soul looks out from its earthly tabernacle. The doors "shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low," are the lips fallen close together in the aged face, when the teeth are gone. The ears are the "daughters

of musick." They are brought low, because their delicate powers of perception have failed. Like the old Barzillai, their owner can hear no more the voice of singing men or singing women.¹ Nevertheless wakeful old age "rises up at the voice of the bird"—it is aroused at the first signs of daybreak. It is afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way, because it is timid and fearful of every danger; and to the enfeebled frame even the grasshopper is a burden, for the very slightest weight presses heavily upon it. The almond tree, sheeted with blossoms, is generally supposed to represent the white hairs of old age, in spite of the obvious objection that the tint of the almond blossoms renders the comparison somewhat inappropriate. When the silver cord, which binds body and soul together, is broken, then the body, by whatever figure we may describe its relation to the soul—whether we call it the golden bowl of the lamp in which the flame of life is nourished, or the earthen vessel which receives the living waters from their divine source, or the cunningly contrived mechanism by which the deep springs of Divine Life are made manifest in human existence—crumbles into dust, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Many persons will think that the beauty of the passage is marred by thus regarding it as an elaborate and artificial allegory. But there can be little doubt that this is the correct interpretation. The alphabetical acrostics in the Psalms and elsewhere will occur to the reader as an illustration of the artificial form which Hebrew poetical composition sometimes assumed. The idea of man's body as the house or dwelling-place of his spirit is very common. In the Book of Job human beings are they "that

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 31–40.

dwell in houses of clay.”¹ There are some well-known examples of a similar manner of speaking in the New Testament.² The comparison has been elaborated by an old English writer with quite as much minuteness as by the writer of Ecclesiastes³ :—

“ Man’s *Body’s* like a *House* : his greater *Bones*
 Are the main *Timber* ; and the lesser ones
 Are smaller *Splints* : his *Ribs* are *Laths*, daub’d o’er,
 Plaster’d with *Flesh* and *Blood* : his *Mouth’s* the *Door*,
 His *Throat’s* the narrow *Entry* : and his *Heart*
 Is the *Great Chamber*, full of curious Art.”

And so on, even to greater detail. A closer parallel to the spirit of the Hebrew moralist is to be found in “The Deserted House” of Mr. Tennyson :—

“ Life and Thought have gone away
 Side by side,
 Leaving door and windows wide :
 Careless tenants they !

 All within is dark as night :
 In the windows is no light ;
 And no murmur at the door,
 So frequent on its hinge before.

 Close the door, the shutters close,
 Or thro’ the windows we shall see
 The nakedness and vacancy
 Of the dark, deserted house.

 Come away : no more of mirth
 Is here, or merry-making sound.
 The house was builded of the earth,
 And shall fall again to ground.”

¹ Job iv. 19.

² 2 Cor. v. 1 : 2 Pet. i. 13, 14.

³ Francis Quarles, quoted in A. S. Palmer’s *Leaves from a Word-hunter’s Note-book*, p. 11. Mr. Palmer’s interesting chapter contains many illustrations of the same comparison. According to Quarles, the nose is the chimney, the eyes the windows, the stomach the kitchen, &c.

The Christian poet adds a thought, which appears but indistinctly, if it appears at all, in the Jewish poem :—

“ Come away : for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell ;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us ! ”

*The Song of Solomon, also called “the Canticles” and
“the Song of Songs.”*

No book in the Bible has been the subject of such extreme diversity of opinion as this. It is evidently a love poem of some kind ; and in the opinion of many scholars it is a dramatic composition describing the unsuccessful efforts of Solomon to win the affections of a Shulamite shepherdess, who continues faithful to her rustic lover. If this opinion be correct, the moral of the piece would be “the victory of humble and constant love over the temptations of wealth and royalty.”¹ According to those who advocate the dramatic character of the work, the speakers introduced are the Shulamite shepherdess, her rustic lover, King Solomon, the ladies of his court, addressed as “Daughters of Jerusalem,” the brothers of the shepherdess, and others. Some have gone so far as to suppose that the piece was originally intended for a simple kind of stage representation. There is, however, no evidence for this beyond the fact that it may be capable of being so represented. No names of speakers are given in the text, as they are in the Book of Job, nor is there in the Song of Songs anything corresponding to the initial letters or names which are usually prefixed to the speeches in a

¹ Smith’s *Bib. Dict.*, s. v.

drama to indicate the change of speaker. The different grammatical forms used in different parts of the original, the employment of certain characteristic expressions which are supposed to distinguish the speakers from each other, and the general sense of the whole, have afforded the clues by the aid of which students of the book have endeavoured to assign their parts to the several characters. There is a general agreement amongst them as to the main outlines of the distribution; but it is not surprising that they differ amongst themselves as to some of the less important details. In other respects, as well as in the distribution of the parts, the interpretation of the book is uncertain; the allusions are obscure; and the whole is likely to prove perplexing and unsatisfactory to the ordinary student. We do not recommend anyone to attempt to master the literal meaning of the Song of Solomon without the aid of a good commentary; and we fear that, even with such assistance, the book will be found by many difficult and unprofitable reading. The following little spring song, addressed to the shepherdess by her rustic lover, is more intelligible than the rest, and is quite modern in its tone:—

“ Rise up, my love,
My fair one,
And come away.

For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig-tree splices her green figs,
And the vines in bloom give forth their scent.

Arise, my love,
My fair one,
And come away.

Mystical Interpretation of the Song of Songs.

From very early times it has been the fashion both with Jewish and Christian writers to interpret the Song of Songs in an allegorical and mystic sense, treating it as a parable with a deep spiritual meaning. According to the tradition current among the Christian writers who treat the book in this way, Solomon is the only male speaker. As king and shepherd of Israel he typifies Christ, who is both king and shepherd of His people, and a Royal Bridegroom. The Church is His Bride, represented in the poem by the female speaker; who in some passages also represents the soul of the individual believer, and occasionally, according to the views of some interpreters, that first and Queen of believers, the Virgin Mother of Christ. The florid style and the rich imagery of the poem render it a convenient subject for this kind of treatment, and many commentaries, in which the mystical method of interpretation has been adopted, have been adorned with great beauties of thought and expression. It is also acknowledged that such commentaries have formed the favourite study of many pious souls, and have contributed much to the spiritual edification of the Church of Christ. But we cannot agree with those who set up the mystical method of interpretation as the only way in which this and other parts of Scripture can be treated, and disparage the efforts of those scholars who have endeavoured to ascertain the literal meaning of the text. Much as there is undoubtedly to be said in favour of the mystical method of interpretation in the case of the Song of Solomon, there is no proof, and not much probability, that the writer of the book had any intention that it should be treated in this way.

Authorship.

It is not known who the writer was. Some scholars still adhere to the belief that the book was written by Solomon. Dr. Littledale, who has produced an interesting commentary on the Song of Songs, by weaving together the best mystical interpretations gathered from the works of a long succession of Christian writers, argues in his preface that there is internal evidence to show that the poem was written before the separation of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and that there is no reason why it may not have been composed by Solomon. Bishop Wordsworth, who takes a very conservative line in his *Commentary on the Bible*, speaks of this and the two preceding books as “the trilogy of Solomon.” These three books, he says, “are not arranged according to the chronological dates of their composition. The Song of Solomon was written first, in the spring-time of Solomon’s best and holiest years. The Proverbs were the fruit of his maturer age. Ecclesiastes was his farewell utterance to the world, when he was on the brink of the grave.”¹

¹ *O. T. Com.*: Introd. to Proverbs, p. ix.

PART III.

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS.

The Hebrew Prophets.

A N often-quoted passage from the Book of Deuteronomy will be our best guide to the meaning of the word Prophet:—“*When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consultor with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. . . . The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me (Moses); unto him ye shall hearken.*”¹ And again:—“*I will raise them up a Prophet*

¹ Deut. xviii. 9-12, 15.

from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”¹

This passage is, in the first place, a condemnation of the unnatural and inhuman practices by which the heathen sought to know the secrets of Providence. It was not by such methods that the people of God were to ascertain the Divine will, but in the natural and true way, namely—from the mouth of living men and women “from among their brethren.” When such teachers are themselves taught of God, they are the real revealers of the Divine will—the true prophets. It is in accordance with this meaning of the word that all the great servants of God, who were leaders of religious movements, or whose heaven-sent wisdom was a light and guide to their fellow-men, have been called “prophets”: the patriarch Abraham, the lawgiver Moses, Samuel the father of his country, and David the royal psalmist, no less than Isaiah, or Elijah, or Haggai. And we may add that it is in accordance with the same use of the word that a greater Teacher than any of these, who looks at life with human eyes, and speaks with human lips, and whose words of heavenly wisdom comes to us with Divine authority and power, is called “Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet of Galilee.”

But in addition to this general sense in which the word “prophet” may be used of all teachers of Divine truth, we find it also used in the Old Testament, in a more limited sense, of certain persons who were regarded as the recognized official channels through which the Almighty was accustomed to communicate His will to His people, and who formed an order as distinct and

¹ Deut. xviii. 18.

definite as the priesthood. When Jerusalem was threatened with destruction by the Assyrians, Hezekiah sent a solemn deputation to “Isaiah the prophet” “to inquire of the Lord.” Josiah sent a similar deputation to “Huldah the prophetess.” Elijah also was “the prophet,” and when the end of his ministry was at hand, he anointed Elisha to be “prophet” in his room. Gad even held an official position as prophet at David’s court; he was “David’s seer,” “the king’s seer,”¹ and was called on along with “Nathan the prophet” to assist the king in arranging the musical services of the temple. These instances are enough to show that the name “prophet” marked a distinct order of persons.

Three Hebrew Names for a Prophet; Meaning of the English Word.

The ordinary Hebrew name for the prophet is *Nâbi*, a word which is supposed to be derived from a verb signifying to “bubble forth” like a fountain. The meaning of the title would therefore be one who pours forth words of Divine truth. The Greek word *Prophete*, from which the English word “prophet” is derived, had originally a similar signification. It meant one who interpreted or declared the will of God. The idea of predicting the future, which is commonly associated with the word “prophet,” did not originally belong to the Greek word, and does not now of necessity belong to the English word. The prophet is a teacher, who may predict the future, as

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 11; 2 Chron. xxix. 25. See also 1 Chron. xxv. 5; 2 Chron. xxxv. 15.

he may explain the present or the past.¹ It is, however, easy to see how the word should have come to signify, in common use, little more than a predictor of future events, in consequence of the number of predictions contained in the prophetical writings, and connected with the names of prophets elsewhere in the Old Testament.

There are two other Hebrew names, *Roëh* and *Chozeh*, which are less frequently used to describe the prophetical office. Each of these words signifies “one who sees,” and is translated in the English Bible by the word “seer.” The former of them is the word by which Samuel is commonly described; and we learn from a passage in the First Book of Samuel that it was an early word, which afterwards went out of use, and was superseded by the word *Nâbi*.² It has been supposed that this change of title indicates a corresponding change in the functions of the prophet; and it is not in itself improbable that the prophetical office should have undergone a process of development, and that the idea of the prophet as a divinely-guided teacher of men should have become in later times more definite and distinct than it had been in earlier ages. But the change in the name alone is hardly

¹ The title of Jeremy Taylor’s *Discourse of the Liberty of Prophecying*, i. e. freedom of teaching, is the standard instance used to show the general meaning of the English word “prophesy” or “prophet.” A concordance will supply examples in plenty from the Bible. The use of the compound “fore-prophecyed,” in the heading of 2 Kings xxiii., shows that the simple word “prophesy” did not necessarily imply foretelling.

² 1 Sam. ix. 9. The other places in which *Roëh* occurs are (used of Samuel) 1 Sam. ix. 11, 18, 19: 1 Chron. ix. 22; xxvi. 28; xxix. 29; also in 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 10: Is. xxx. 10, &c. *Chozeh* is used of Gad in 2 Sam. xxiv. 11: 1 Chron. xxi. 9; xxix. 29: 2 Chron. xxix. 25; also in 2 Kings xvii. 13: 1 Chron. xxv. 5: 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xix. 2; xxix. 30; xxxv. 15: Is. xxix. 10: Amos vii. 12: Micah iii. 7, &c. Samuel is called a prophet (*Nâbi*) in 1 Sam. iii. 20: 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

sufficient foundation upon which to build such a theory of development.

The Prophetical Communities.

There is no record of the origin of the prophetical order, but it is generally supposed that the machinery which secured its continuance amongst the Hebrews was due to Samuel. In his time and in connexion with his history we first read of companies of persons who were called "prophets," or "sons of the prophets," who lived together in a common dwelling, and appear to have been under the headship of some distinguished teacher. These communities are supposed to have been of the nature of schools for educating candidates for the prophetical office, perhaps bearing some resemblance to our modern theological colleges. Of course it did not follow that every one who received the prophet's training possessed of necessity the light and goodness to make him a true teacher and a safe guide. There are frequent warnings against false and unworthy prophets. On the other hand we have, in the case of Amos, an example of one who was called by God to prophesy, though he had not the regular professional training or the formal commission of a prophet. "I am no prophet," he says, "neither am I a prophet's son, but I am a herdman and a gatherer of sycomore fruit; and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel."¹

Functions of the Hebrew Prophets.

Many of the prophets were historians, and some of the finest examples of Hebrew poetry are to be found in the

¹ Amos vii. 14, 15.

prophetic writings ; music also is mentioned in connexion with prophesying,¹ and on one occasion, at least, we read of a prophet taking the place of a physician.² Possibly all these subjects, literature, music, perhaps medicine, as well as national history and the study of the civil and religious law, were included in the curriculum of the prophetical seminaries. But the men who, under the title of "prophets," took part in the public life of Judah and Israel were much more than the national historians, or poets, or musicians. They were the moral and religious teachers—the divinely-appointed guides of God's people. In great national emergencies appeal is made to them for counsel and direction, and their words are listened to with the deepest reverence, as for the voice of God Himself. Sometimes they come forward of their own accord, unbidden, except by the Divine command, to reprove irreligion, to champion the oppressed; if necessary, to rebuke even kings, or to rekindle heavenly hope in the breasts of God's servants.

The Prophetical Books.

In the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament we have preserved to us examples of the teaching of the Hebrew prophets. But some of the prophets who occupy the most prominent places in the Historical Books—Elijah, for instance, and Elisha, the great prophets of the northern kingdom—left no written memorials of their teaching ; or, if they did, no memory of them has reached us. Mention is made, in the case of other prophets, of books written by them which have not been preserved. On the other hand, some of those whose writings are preserved amongst the

¹ 1 Sam. x. 5 : 2 Kings iii. 15. ² 2 Kings xx. 7. Comp. 2 Kings iv. 22.

Prophetic Books are not mentioned at all in the history ; and in a few instances, where they tell us nothing about themselves, we are left to gather by conjecture from their writings the time and circumstanees in which they lived.

The Prophets of the Last Days.

Of the prophets whose writings are preserved in the Canon of the Old Testament, a large proportion lived at the time when the existence of the Jewish state and of many of the surrounding nations was threatened by the approaching power, first, of the Assyrians, and then of the Babylonians. The recollection of this fact will help us to understand many of the allusions in the Prophetic Books. A few words which the late Dean Milman has written on this subjeet are so appropriate that we must quote them here :—“As the storm darkened over the Hebrew kingdoms, the voices of the Prophets became louder and more wild. Those whose writings have been preserved in our sacred volume now come upon the scene. In their magnificent lyric odes we have a poetical history of those momentous times, not merely describing the fall of the two Hebrew nations, but that of the adjacent kingdoms likewise. As each independent tribe or monarchy was swallowed up in the great universal empire of Assyria, the seers of Judah watched the progress of the invader, and uttered their sublime funeral anthems over the greatness, the prosperity, and independence of Moab and Ammon, Damascus and Tyre. They were like the great tragic chorus to the awful drama which was unfolding itself in the Eastern world. Nor did they confine their views to their own internal affairs, or to their own immediate neighbourhood. Jonah appeared as a man under Divine

influence in Nineveh; and Nahum described the subsequent fate of that vast city in images which human imagination or human language has never surpassed.”¹

The Kingdom of the Messiah.

But in the general confusion and downfall of the old order of things, the prophets did not lose faith in the future. Beyond the present troubles they always saw hope for the people of God. Righteousness and truth could not die. Though other kingdoms were to fall, the Kingdom of God must stand. If for a time it appeared to have fallen, it was only in appearance; it would rise again; it would outlast all others; in the end it would have universal dominion. In prophetic visions, which took their form from the cherished memories of past days, the prophets of Judah saw this kingdom established at Jerusalem. A Prince of the Royal House of David would yet reign in Zion, beneath whose sceptre all the glories of David’s and Solomon’s times should be revived; yea, and more than revived, they should be infinitely surpassed. Israel and Judah should then be united again, and their old enemies should bow beneath their yoke. More than this, righteousness and truth should prevail within their borders, and all nations would acknowledge the God of Israel, and would flock to worship on Mount Zion.

The Suffering Servant of Jehovah.

By the side of this picture of a future kingdom, which is frequently represented as established by force, and as trampling the nations of earth beneath its feet, there appears, in one remarkable series of passages at least, another

¹ Milman: *Hist. of Jews*, Book viii., pp. 368–9.

picture of a people and a Person—the people and the person sometimes distinctly separated, sometimes strangely identified—who are to act a very different part. The meek-spirited servant of Jehovah shall not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, nor quench the smoking flax. Himself despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he shall bear with unmurmuring patience the sorrows of others, and shall carry their griefs. Even his life shall be willingly offered as a sacrifice for their transgressions. He shall be brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he shall not open his mouth. But He, too, shall win His victory, and establish His kingdom—“the meek-spirited shall inherit the earth”; He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

*Affinities between the Prophetic Writings and other parts
of the Old Testament.*

Most of the ideas which are to be found in the Prophetic Writings appear, more or less, in other parts of the Old Testament. The Psalms, especially, resemble the Prophetic Writings in many particulars. In them, as well as in the Books of the Prophets, these two pictures of the triumphant kingdom and the suffering Servant of Jehovah are also to be found. In the forty-fifth Psalm, for instance, we read of an anointed King, who is described in language closely resembling that of the prophets, when they speak of the coming Messiah. He is fairer than the children of men, He is full of grace, He reigns in righteousness and truth for ever; but He is terrible to those that oppose Him—His arrows are sharp in the hearts of His enemies. In the twenty-second Psalm, on

the other hand, though the name of the Servant of Jehovah is not mentioned, there are so many points of resemblance to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that we can hardly be wrong in identifying the subjects of the two passages. The Book of Job may also be compared as expressing a somewhat similar idea in another form.

The Predictive Element in the Prophetic Writings.

The nature of the predictive element in the Prophetic Writings is a subject which has given rise to much eager discussion. Were the prophets able to announce beforehand definite dates and events, names of persons, and such circumstances as we commonly call accidental, long in advance of the time of their occurrence? Did Isaiah, for instance, who died about a century before the commencement of the Babylonian Captivity, and long before the Persians had appeared as a prominent power in Asia, foretell that the Jews were to be delivered from Babylon, and restored to their native country, through the instrumentality of a Persian leader named Cyrus? Or did the secret of prophetic foresight rest in this, that, enlightened by the Divine Spirit which dwelt in them, the prophets saw into the heart of things, apprehending the deep principles which underlie all life, and which determine the course of history, whether of the individual or of the nation, and so foresaw the future, as they understood the present? To us it seems that, if we must make a choice between these two views, the latter comes nearer to the truth than the former. We do not mean that such a prediction as that of the name of the future deliverer of Israel would be absolutely incredible, if there were clear evidence that it had been made and was fulfilled. Nor would it be philosophical to pronounce at once that the

fulfilment of it must have been accidental. But there is no proof that such predictions were made.¹ We know, moreover, that the attempt to maintain "the literal fulfilment of prophecy" always leads to endless confusion and perplexity. On the other hand, when we say that it seems to us more reasonable to regard prophecy as dealing with the spirit and the principles of history rather than with its details, we do not claim to understand all the principles that govern the course of history, or to appreciate its spirit, as the prophets did. To make such a claim would be equivalent to claiming the gift of prophecy for ourselves. We are not, however, to assume that the two theories which we have indicated exhaust all the possible explanations of the facts of Hebrew prophecy. Even the facts themselves are but very imperfectly known to us, and until our knowledge of them is more accurate and complete than it is at present, it would be rash to put forward as final any theory on the subject.

¹ The question of the date of the passages in which the name of Cyrus is mentioned is, at the very least, an open question.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

TITLE.

"THE VISION OF ISAIAH THE SON OF AMOZ, WHICH HE SAW CONCERNING JUDAH AND JERUSALEM IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH, JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH, KINGS OF JUDAH."¹

The Prophet.

WE have already met with the Prophet Isaiah in the history of Hezekiah's reign, and we are told elsewhere that he wrote an account of the reign of an earlier king Uzziah.² The title of the present book says that he prophesied during the reigns of these two kings, and during the two intervening reigns. Of his personal history we know very little. We gather from the book which bears his name that he was married, that he had two sons, and that he lived in Jerusalem. Amoz the father of Isaiah was not Amos the prophet. Though the two names are similar in English and the same in the Greek, they are quite distinct in the Hebrew.

¹ Though these titles of the prophetic books, and the headings which are prefixed to some of the particular prophecies are printed as part of the text in the English Bible, while the headings of the Psalms are printed separately, there is no such distinction in the original. Like the headings of the Psalms, those in the prophetic books are not always to be depended on.

² 2 Chron. xxvi. 22.

The Book.

The book which bears the name of the Prophet Isaiah consists of a number of prophetical pieces, put together in such a way as to form a connected whole. The collection appears to include pieces of widely different dates ; but there is no doubt that the genuine prophecies of Isaiah form the basis of the work. In its present form it was probably not completed until some time after the return from Babylon ; though, as in the case of the Pentateuch and other parts of the Old Testament, some of its materials may have previously existed in other forms.

The Hebrew Tenses.

The reader who compares the Analyses which we are about to give of the contents of the prophetical books with the English text of the books themselves may occasionally notice a difference between the two in the tenses of verbs. Similar differences will be found to exist between the authorized version and the revised translations given in any of the standard commentaries. It may appear strange that there should be room for such difference of opinion on so simple a matter as the tenses of verbs. But the explanation of the uncertainty is to be found in the incompleteness of the Hebrew tense system. There are, in fact, only two tense forms in the Hebrew—an imperfect tense which expresses simply an incomplete action, and a perfect tense which expresses a completed action. Each of these may be used in relation to the past, the present, or the future ; and in general it can be determined only by the sense of the whole passage, or by the context, to which of these three times the verb relates. Another cause of

occasional uncertainty as to the time to which the prophetic descriptions apply is that, like the writers in other languages, the Hebrew prophets sometimes use the perfect tense of a future event, when they wish to speak of it as sure to come to pass—as sure as if it had already occurred. The perfect used in this way is called *the perfect of prophetic certainty.*

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

An Expostulation with the People of Judah.

(Is. 1.)

At a time when Judah has been devastated by enemies and the capital hardly spared, the prophet makes a powerful and affectionate appeal to his countrymen to repent and amend, ere it be too late. He points out that it is not sacrifices and the mere outward performance of the rites of religion that the Almighty requires, but to “cease to do evil,” to “learn to do well,” to act justly, to put down oppression, to judge the cause of the fatherless, to plead for the widow. The neglect of these duties will be the ruin of Jerusalem. But there is still time for repentance, and if they will repent and amend there is no limit to what the mercy of God will yet do for them; though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If they be willing and obedient, they shall yet eat the good of the land: but if they refuse and rebel, they shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Though this piece is now placed at the beginning of the book of prophecies, to which it serves as a suitable introduction, we shall see, when we have examined the order and arrangement of the contents of the book a little further, that this fact is no proof of the early date of its composition. It reads like the exhortation of a prophet who has been for some time ministering amongst the people, rather than the address of a beginner. The opinion most commonly entertained is that it was written at some time during the reign of Hezekiah, in which reign we know that Palestine was twice invaded by the Assyrians.

The Glories of the Messianic Kingdom, and the Judgments which must precede its Advent.

(Is. ii.-iv.)

A propheey “concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” It commences with a glorious description of the Messianic time. The days are coming when “the mountain of the Lord’s house”—Mount Zion, upon which the Temple of Jehovah stands, “shall be exalted above the hills,” and “all nations shall flow unto it.” “Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jernsalem,” and God’s peaceful rule shall be established amongst the nations. But before that time comes there must be a heavy judgment, which is called for by the sins of the people of God. The sins specially mentioned are idolatry, and oppression of the poor, and the pride and luxury of the women of Jerusalem ; all of which the prophet seems to say have arisen from foreign trade and association with heathen nations. When Judah shall have been purified by adversity, then, but not till then, shall her true glory appear.

(Is. v.)

The parable of the Lord’s vineyard, which has brought forth wild grapes after all the care that has been expended upon it. “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant ; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” The parable is followed by a denouement of woes upon the evil-doers ; upon the selfish owners of property, “that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place left,” and upon the revellers, “that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them.” The great houses shall be desolate ; the fields shall yield no produce ; and the banqueters shall go into captivity, or be swallowed by the grave : for a great tribulation is coming upon the country, and the Lord is summoning hostile nations (the Assyrians?) against it from afar.

Chapters ii.-v. form a connected propheey, though it is not certain that all parts of it were originally composed at the same time. The Messianic passage with which this prophecy opens is also to be found in the prophet Micah. It is possible that both writers may have derived it from some earlier source.

The Prophet's Commission.

(Is. vi.)

A vision which the prophet saw “in the year that King Uzziah died.” The Almighty appeared as a king sitting in state upon his throne, attended by seraphim. When the prophet was overwhelmed with the sense of his unfitness to stand in the Divine presence, one of the seraphim touched his lips with a coal (or a stone) from the altar, and his sin was removed. He then received the commission to go as God’s messenger to his countrymen. But he was warned, even then, that they would be deaf to the teachings of heavenly wisdom, until their land was wasted and left without inhabitants.

No doubt intended to describe Isaiah’s first call to prophetical activity. It may be compared with the accounts given of the way in which Jeremiah and Ezekiel received their first commissions, which stand at the beginning of their books. Probably this vision stood at the beginning of some earlier edition of Isaiah’s prophecies, and in subsequent alterations the preceding chapters, which are general in their character, were placed before it as an introduction to the larger work.

Ephraim and Syria, and the Son of Tabeal.

(Is. vii. 1–viii. 4.)

In the reign of Ahaz, when the allied kings of Ephraim and Syria are threatening Jerusalem, with the design of setting “the son of Tabeal” upon the throne of Judah, Isaiah comes forward to encourage the Jewish king. He bids him trust in God, and not to fear the allies, whose cause shall not stand. Ahaz shows himself unwilling to be guided by the prophet’s counsel. Isaiah therefore warns him that the power of Ephraim and Syria shall be broken, but that his own country too shall be desolated between Assyria and Egypt. Three signs are given by which the truth of the prophet’s predictions may be verified: (1.) Before a child, then about to be born, to whom the name Immanuel, *God with us*, is to be given, shall be old enough to “refuse the evil and choose the good,” the land of the enemies shall be desolated. But desolation shall come upon Judah too, for the Lord shall hiss for the flies from Egypt and the bees from Assyria; he shall shave with a razor hired from the banks of the river (the

king of Assyria); and the land shall be swept of its inhabitants. (2.) As a sign to which he can appeal, when this prediction is fulfilled, the prophet writes upon a large tablet in the presence of unimpeachable witnesses the words *Maher shalal hash baz, Hasten booty, speed spoil.* (3.) These words are further given as a name to a newborn son of the prophet, “for before the child shall have knowledge to cry My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

Shear-jashub, the name of another of the prophet’s sons, who is mentioned in this section, is also evidently symbolical; it means *A remnant shall return.* In the Book of Hosea there is a similar example of a prophet teaching through the names of his children.¹ Some have therefore thought that the child Immanuel, who was about to be born at the time to which this section refers, was simply a third instance of one of the prophet’s children bearing a symbolical name. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah vii. 14 to describe the mother of the child is more general than the English word “virgin,” by which it is translated. It may mean either a married or unmarried woman; and would therefore be applicable to the prophet’s wife. Ewald and others are of opinion that the child referred to was the coming Messiah, and that His advent was expected about that time (see ch. ix. 6, 7, and ch. xi.); but that “there is nothing said as to who the young woman was,” “because it has nothing to do with the connexion” in the present passage. Many other conjectures have been put forward on the subject.

The invasion of Judah by the allied forces of Israel and Syria is mentioned in the Books of Kings and Chronicles.² It is probable that the object of the invading kings in trying to place “the son of Tabeal” (whose name is otherwise unknown to us) upon the throne of Judah, was to form a combination of the western powers to resist the advance of Assyria.

The reader will notice that in this section, as well as elsewhere, the northern kingdom is called Ephraim, after the name of the tribe which was chief in the north, as Judah was in the south. The name Israel is not always used exclusively of the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, as it is in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. In the Prophets it is sometimes applied to all the descendants of Jacob.

¹ Hos. i. 4, 6, 9, &c.

² See p. 76.

(Is. viii. 5–ix. 7.)

A further discourse dealing with the same subject. It would appear from the opening verses that some of the Jews were in favour of the plans of Syria and Israel, and that the object of the prophet was to induce the Jews simply to stand by themselves, in the confidence that God would protect His own people, and not to be looking for foreign alliances. Because they will not do this, he sees nothing but disaster before them. Still through all in the watchword Immanuel there is an unfailing source of hope, and the end of the piece is bright with the most joyful anticipations of the future; the afflicted land beyond the Jordan has a happier future before it, and by the favour of the Almighty the long-promised ruler shall yet sit upon the throne of David.

(Is. ix. 8–x. 4.)

A prophecy against the Kingdom of Israel, belonging to the same time. The efforts to rebuild the fortunes of the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes are in vain, for they have alienated the favour of the Almighty.

If we are right in supposing that the alliance of Israel and Syria and the attempt to set up a king friendly to the two kingdoms in Judaea were due to a design to form a combination against Assyria, the object of this address may have been to convince Judah of the hopelessness of the attempt, and the folly of taking part in it.

The Assyrians.

(Is. x. 5–xii.)

A piece belonging to a later date, after Samaria had been destroyed, and when Jerusalem itself was threatened by the Assyrians. The prophet lifts up his voice against the powerful enemies, and bids them remember that though the Almighty employs them to chastise His people, they are not to forget that they are but instruments in His hands. It is the purpose of Jehovah to allow the destruction of Israel—all except a remnant, which shall learn from adversity to trust in God, and not in earthly alliances. But the faithful in Zion need not fear; though the Assyrian advance to the very walls of Jerusalem, his pride shall be brought down. And the Kingdom of the Messiah shall yet be established. The Gentiles shall seek shelter beneath His peaceful and righteous sway; the exiles shall return from

all lands ; the enmity between Judah and Ephraim shall depart ; all the old enemies shall be put down, Egypt shall be humbled, and Assyria send back her captives, and songs of praise and thanksgiving shall echo within the walls of Zion.

Babylon.

(Is. XIII.—XIV. 23.)

The prophecy about the Assyrians is followed by a number of other pieces also relating to foreign nations, which are put together here in accordance with the general plan of the book of which they now form a part, but apparently without regard to the origin or relative dates of the several pieces. The first of these is the grand composition describing the doom of Babylon—its destruction by the Medes, its subsequent desolation, and the return of the Israelite captives to their own land :—

The tumult of assembling nations is heard amid the mountains ; the Lord is mustering His forces, for His day is at hand—a day of terror for all evil-doers. Behold, against Babylon He is summoning the Medes, a people that will not spare. The Babylonian warriors shall fall by the sword, the women shall be hurried into captivity, and their children shall be “dashed against the stones.” Their houses shall be spoiled ;

And Babylon,
The glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

It shall never be inhabited,
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

Even the wandering Bedwin shall not pitch his tent upon the ill-omened spot which its ruins shall mark, nor shall any shepherds lead their flocks there. It shall be the home of unclean creatures, and the haunt of evil spirits :—

The wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses,
And dragons in their pleasant places ;
And her time is near to come,
And her days shall not be prolonged.

But the Lord will have mercy upon Jacob, and restore the banished people to their own land. He will fulfil all His promises to them, and “they shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.” As for the king of Babylon, he shall become a proverb for vanished greatness. He goes down to the shadowy regions of Hades, weak as the weakest there. Ah! how has he fallen, and his glory departed! He that said he would ascend to heaven is brought down to hell. His family is extinguished, and his once proud city a desolation.

This prophecy, though now placed with some appropriateness in continuation of the prediction of the downfall of the Assyrians, is believed by many to belong to a much later period, probably to the close of the Babylonian Captivity. See the remarks on chapter xxi. 1–10, and on chapters xxiv.–xxvii.

The Assyrian Invader.

(Is. xiv. 24–27.)

The power of the Assyrian shall be broken in the Holy Land, and his yoke removed. This is the purpose of the Lord of Hosts.

The Philistines.

(Is. xiv. 28–32.)

Palestine (the country of the Philistines) is not to rejoice because of the downfall of her oppressor; for though the rod that smote her is broken, “out of the serpent’s root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.” The smoke of burning towns is advancing from the North; but the needy (the suffering people of Zion) shall dwell safely under the protection of the Almighty.

The heading, which says that this prophecy was uttered in the year that King Ahaz died, seems to imply that Ahaz was the rod that smote the Philistines. The invaders from the North are the Assyrians. The way in which the last oppressor is described as coming out of the root of the first hardly agrees with this interpretation. The prophecy, as first composed, may have had a different application.

Moab.

(Is. xv., xvi.)

“The Burden of Moab.”—A pitiful lament for her desolations. Her chief cities are taken and laid waste. The weeping people throng the high places; the land is full of mourning and woe. The fugitives shall but escape one enemy to fall into the hands of another. Moab is exhorted to send in her submission to Judah;¹ and Judah to deal pitifully with the afflicted, and give asylum to the outcasts;² so shall the throne of David be established in mercy and in justice. This word spoken long ago by the Lord of the humbling of Moab³ shall now be fulfilled. “Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble.”

An earlier piece, recalled and applied to current events. The style of the quoted piece is peculiar, and not like Isaiah’s style. It is interesting to note that very many of the names of places mentioned in it are to be found upon the Moabite stone.⁴ The “years of an hireling” are years strictly measured.

The Syrians.

(Is. xvii. 1–11.)

“The Burden of Damascus.”—“Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.” Her ally Israel is also threatened. But a remnant of the Israelites shall turn to God and be saved.

The Rushing of the Nations.

(Is. xviii. 12–14.)

A short and striking piece, apparently not originally connected with the preceding. It is supposed to have referred to the numerous nations marching under the banner of Assyria:—

“Woe to the multitude of many peoples, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a

¹ Is. xvi. 1, comp. 2 Kings iii. 4. ² Is. xvi. 3, 4 (alternative translation).

³ Is. xvi. 13 (amended translation). ⁴ See p. 1 50.

rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. And behold at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

Ethiopia.

(Is. xviii.)

Alarmed by the advance of the Assyrians (?) Ethiopia is sending swift messengers in papyrus boats along her river highways; but the prophet bids the messengers to announce to their swarthy countrymen—and calls all the earth to witness—that the Lord, whose seat is in heaven, will suddenly cut down the power of the approaching enemy. His warriors shall fall like the half-ripe clusters of grapes before the pruning-knife, and their bodies shall be left unburied upon the mountains. Then the warlike Ethiopians, a nation hitherto unconquered, shall acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah.

A difficult piece. According to Ewald's view, it was occasioned by the arrival in Jerusalem of an Ethiopian embassy, offering alliance and assistance against the Assyrians. The statement that the messengers travelled on the sea seems to favour this idea; but they would not have crossed the Mediterranean in papyrus boats, and "the sea" may mean the Nile, so that the messengers are more probably those sent through their own dominions to summon the Ethiopian warriors to oppose the advance of the Assyrians. There is much uncertainty as to the meaning of the expressions used in this chapter to describe the Ethiopians and their country. Instead of "the land shadowing with wings," some translate "the land of the whirring of wings" (*i.e.* of innumerable insects), or "the land of winged boats," &c. A nation "scattered and peeled" should perhaps be "tall and polished" (*i.e.* sunburnt), or "tall and nimble." The Hebrew words rendered "meted out and trodden down" are better understood in an active sense, as in the margin of the English Bible, to express the all-subduing strength of the Ethiopians. "Whose land the rivers have spoiled" may also be rendered "whose land the rivers divide," or "cut through."

Egypt.

(Is. xix.)

A Divine judgment is threatening Egypt, whose idols cannot stand before Jehovah—the land shall be torn by civil war, and its strength shall waste away, and Egypt shall be subjected to a cruel master. The waters of the river, the source of her fertility, shall fail, and vegetation shall wither away, and every trade shall be depressed. Her princes are foolish ; they cannot help her, for the Lord has confounded their wisdom. In that day Egypt shall be afraid, and shall acknowledge the power of Judah ; the language of Palestine shall be spoken in Egypt ; there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land ; and the power of Jehovah shall be felt and acknowledged. In that day Judah shall be the third with Assyria and Egypt, for all three shall be united in the service of Jehovah.

The Siege of Ashdod.

(Is. xx.)

In the year that an Assyrian army under the Tartan, or commander-in-chief, was sent by Sargon to lay siege to the Philistine town Ashdod, Isaiah was commanded to loose the sackcloth from his loins, and put off his sandals from his feet, and appear “naked and barefoot” before the people, and to tell them that so should the king of Assyria lead away the Ethiopians and Egyptians naked and barefoot into captivity ; and those who depended on Egypt to save them from Assyria should see the vanity of their expectation.

The strong town of Ashdod commanded the route to Egypt by the Mediterranean shore. The siege of Ashdod was therefore a threat to Egypt.

The Fall of Babylon.

(Is. xxI. 1–10.)

Another piece relating to the taking of Babylon. Her fate is coming upon her like a whirlwind in the desert. The prophet sees a vision of the capture ; Elam and Media are advancing to the attack ; the merciless conquerors are dealing mercilessly. Filled with sorrow and dismay at the sight, he appeals to the princes of Babylon to leave their banquets and make ready for defence. But his warning is in

vain. It is too late, for as the Lord's watchman stands upon his tower of observation, he sees the columns of the assailants already advancing—horsemen, and chariots, and camels. After long and anxious waiting he sees part of the cavalcade returning; and then he knows the truth:—"Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath dashed to the ground." Terrible are the Lord's chastisements! but His prophets must declare the truth.

The title "Burden of the Desert of the Sea," prefixed to this piece, may have been suggested by the mention of the desert in the first verse, and may have been meant to describe the plain of Babylon, which was intersected by the Euphrates and Tigris.¹

The date of these pieces relating to the fall of Babylon is a much debated question. They may be later compositions, belonging to the period of the Babylonian Captivity, and relating to the siege and capture of that great city by Cyrus; or they may be genuine Isaianic fragments relating to earlier events. We know from the inscriptions that Babylon was once besieged by Sargon, and twice by Sennacherib; and these three sieges would have fallen in the lifetime of Isaiah. It is not unlikely that earlier compositions should have been slightly altered, so as to suit later events.

The Silent Land.

(Is. xxii. 11, 12.)

Out of Seir (the country of the Edomites) an eager inquiry comes, asking the prophetical watchman if the night will soon be over:—"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" To which the prophet returns the enigmatical answer—"The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come."

Perhaps the meaning of this obscure answer may be:—The night of sorrow will certainly pass, but it shall be as surely succeeded in time by some other visitation; for, while the earth remaineth, the day of joy and the night of sorrow shall not cease to succeed one another. If you, who are strangers to Israel's God, wish for the guiding counsel of His prophet while you are passing through

¹ Comp. Ps. xxxvii. 1; Jer. li. 13, &c.

these changing scenes of life, come, inquire! He is ready to answer.

The word Dumah, which occurs in the title of this prophecy, is also a puzzle. It may be a name of Edom, or of some city in Edom; or it may mean "silence," in which case the title would be "Oracle concerning the silent (or desolate) land," or, "Oracle of silence," *i. e.* that gives no answer.

Arabia.

(Is. xxI. 13-17.)

The fugitive Dedanites (an Arabian tribe) must camp in the wilds. Let the Temanites (another tribe) afford them supplies, for they are fleeing from war—war that within a year, strictly measured, shall dim the glory of Kedar (*i. e.* the tribes of Arabia generally), and cut their warriors short.

Both Sargon and Sennacherib in their inscriptions claim to have subjugated the Arabian tribes.

Ill-timed Rejoicings in Jerusalem.

(Is. xxII. 1-14.)

The prophet asks the meaning of the public rejoicings in the city. It was no time for rejoicing, but a day of sorrow. Their fighting men had not fallen in battle, but had fled, or had been made prisoners; their country was flooded with enemies; Jerusalem had been almost taken, in spite of their defensive works. It was to God alone that they should look for protection. A day of humiliation would be more in place than their joyous festival.

Ewald conjectures that this was an utterance of Isaiah, occasioned by the conclusion of a dishonourable peace with the Assyrians. The title, "Burden of the Valley of Vision," was evidently derived from v. 5, where the Valley of Vision is supposed by some to mean Jerusalem, the city of the prophets; but this is very uncertain.

Shebna the Prime Minister is Denounced.

(Is. xxII. 15-25.)

The prophet is sent to denounce the pride of Shebna the prime minister, who has had a sepulchre hewn for himself in the rock

during his life-time, after the manner of Eastern grandees. He shall be hurled down from his lofty station, and shall die in another land ; and his place shall be filled by the more trusted Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.

Eliakim and Shebna are both mentioned again as holding office at the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Eliakim is then steward of the royal household, and Shebna only scribe or secretary.¹

Tyre.

(Is. xxiii.)

The sad fate of Tyre. The fleets of merchantmen, returning home from her western colonies, hear at Chittim (Cyprus) the sorrowful tidings that their homes are ruined and their harbour destroyed. The inhabitants of the coast,² whose prosperity depended upon the trade of Tyre and Sidon, are smitten with dismay ; and when the report shall reach Egypt,³ her people shall be sorely pained at the tidings, for it was by Phœnician merchants that the grain of Egypt⁴ was carried across the great waters of the Mediterranean. Tyre was the mart of nations, but now the sea disowns her daughter(?). The joyous city, whose antiquity was of ancient days, cannot be recognized. Her people must pass away to other lands amid the lamentations of their neighbours, for it is the purpose of Jehovah to bring down her pride. Let the ships of Tarshish howl, for their stronghold is laid waste.

The prophecy, having returned again in v. 14 to the address to the ships, with which it started, is followed by an appendix, apparently a later addition, to the effect that after seventy years Tyre shall be restored again, and become a centre of trade ; but her wealth shall be for the support of God's people.

The Divine Judgments and their Final Results.

(Is. xxiv.)

A curse has fallen upon the earth (or upon the land of Judah). Its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest are scattered, its fields lie waste, the city is in utter ruin, and the sound of its revelry is heard

¹ Is. xxxvi. 3.

³ Verse 5 (translation amended).

² "Isle," vv. 2, 6.

⁴ "The seed of Sihor" (the Nile), v. 3.

no more. From the remnant left in distant lands a song of praise uprises. But alas! what scenes of desolation! It is a terrible time for the inhabitants of the earth (or Judæa). Nevertheless the day is at hand when Jehovah shall have put down all powers that oppose Him, whether in heaven or on earth, and will reign gloriously in Mount Zion.

(Is. xxv.)

Praise be to Jehovah, who brings to ruin the strong city of the oppressor, and compels the proud to acknowledge His might. He is the sure defence of the weak. Now shall Mount Zion be the centre of blessing to the earth. Its light shall dispel the darkness that over-spreads the nations. Sorrow and death shall be no more. The patience of those who have waited for the Lord shall be rewarded with full salvation, and the hateful Moabites shall be trampled down.

(Is. xxvi.)

In that day shall songs of praise be sung in the land of Judah:—

We have a strong city :

Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

Open ye the gates,

That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee :
Because he trusteth in Thee.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever :

For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

For God's judgments are in all the earth ; He brings down the proud and exalts the lowly ; and for them, who through all changes wait on Him with a patient teachable spirit, a calm and glorious future is certain.

(Is. xxvii.)

In that day the Lord shall judge the powers of the earth ; but He will take care of the vineyard which He has planted. His wrath is not against it, but against those who destroy it. His merciful judgments shall purify it from all traces of idolatry, while the defenced city of this world's power shall perish for ever. He shall gather His people again from Assyria and from Egypt.

The subject of these four chapters may be described as a general judgment upon the earth, resulting in the purification and final triumph of the people of God. The prophecy may belong to the Assyrian period, and may have been suggested by the events of that period, but its descriptions are too vague to be tied down to any actual facts; they “start from apparently sharply defined historical circumstances, which vanish, however, like will-o’-the-wisps, as soon as you attempt to follow and seize them; for the simple reason that the prophet lays hold of their radical ideas, carries them out beyond their outward historical form, and uses them as emblems of far-off events of the last days.”¹ This remark applies elsewhere as well as here.

Another view supposes that Judea and Jerusalem are the scenes of the desolation described in ch. xxiv., and that the whole belongs to the Babylonian period. But this does not suit so well with the following chapters.

A Series of Prophecies connected with the Assyrian Invasions.

(Is. xxviii.)

Woe to the senseless and dissolute rulers of Ephraim! The Lord has an irresistible destroyer for them. Their glory is a fading flower, a fruit soon to be devoured. Nevertheless, a remnant shall be preserved. Woe, too, to the priest and prophet in Judah! They also have erred. They ridicule the true prophet, repeating his words; but the Lord shall requite them. Their covenant with death—perhaps the alliance with Egypt—shall be in vain. The foundation-stone of Zion is the only true salvation. Their covenant shall be disannulled, and destruction shall overtake them. There is a meaning and purpose in all God’s dealings.

(Is. xxix.)

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! The revolving years are bringing distress; but she shall still be Ariel (God’s lion). Though the enemies shall camp around her, they shall vanish like a dream. The besotted leaders of the people cannot read this riddle: but in a little while their foolish designs shall be exposed, and the truth, so often foretold, shall be plain to all. Then shall the meek and lowly rejoice, when the terrible foe is brought to nought, and the

¹ Delitzsch, *in loc.*

scornful leaders consumed ; then shall Jacob be ashamed of his children no more.

(Is. xxx.)

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help ! The ambassadors have gone to a people that cannot profit them, and to no purpose have their rich presents been sent through the terrible wilderness. Vainly has the prophet cried against this folly, vainly has he assured them that in quietness and confidence, and not in foreign alliances, is the strength of God's people. But they would not listen, and now their perversity shall be their ruin. Still God is waiting to be gracious—longing to bind up the wounds of His people, and to crown them with blessings. The storm of His indignation shall yet burst upon Assyria.

(Is. xxxi.)

Woe, again, to those who go down to Egypt for help, who trust in chariots and horsemen, and look not to the Holy One of Israel. The Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. If the Almighty stretches forth His hand, there is an end to both helpers and helpen. The Lord of Hosts will defend Jerusalem Himself. O that Israel would return to Him whom they have so deeply offended ! Then should Assyria fall, but not by the hand of man.

(Is. xxxii. 1-8.)

The rulers of Judah shall not be blind or foolish any more ; the king shall reign in righteousness, and the princes shall rule justly. They shall be a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. In that day men's eyes shall be opened, and the truth shall be spoken plainly, and each one shall be known for what he is.

(Is. xxxii. 9-20.)

An address to the women of Judah. They are careless women now. But the days of lamentation are at hand, when they shall put off their gay attire, and clothe themselves with sackcloth ; for the pleasant fields must be overgrown with briers, and all the palaces forsaken, before righteousness and peace can be established.

(Is. xxxiii.)

Woe to the (Assyrian) spoiler ! Their multitudes shall be scattered when Jehovah shall arise ; and He will yet be gracious to His people

that have waited for Him. The strong men weep; the highways are deserted, “the wayfaring man ceaseth”; the very land, with its mountains and valleys, seems to mourn and languish. But Jehovah will arise and bring the plans of the destroyer to nought. Their avenging God shall be a terror to the sinners in Zion, as well as to the foreign enemy; but to the upright He shall be a tower of strength. They shall yet dwell in a peaceful land, surrounded by plenty; their eyes shall see the king in his beauty, ruling over an extended territory; and the days of the fierce invader shall be a memory of the past. They shall see Jerusalem a city of solemn assemblies, a quiet habitation, a permanent home. The presence of the glorious Lord shall be to her a sufficient substitute for the broad rivers and streams of Babylon, or other capitals, though no galley shall go with oars near her mountain walls, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. The inhabitant of that city shall no more say “I am sick”: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

(Is. xxxiv.)

Judgment upon all nations, and especially upon Edom. The land of Edom shall be utterly destroyed. “The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.” Wild creatures shall inhabit it; the voice of her nobles shall be heard there no more, but thorns shall come up in her palaces, and nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof.

(Is. xxxv.)

The glorious future. A picture, partly symbolical, partly literal, of that happy time, when “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad,” when “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” Then the feeble faith shall be strong, and evil shall be no more, “and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

The Invasion of Sennacherib.

(Is. xxxvi., xxxvii.)

The story of the invasion of Sennacherib, as already related in the Book of Kings, is repeated here. While the Assyrian king is besieging Lachish, he sends a detachment of his army, under the command of the “Rabshakeh,” against Jerusalem, and demands the surrender of the city. Encouraged by Isaiah, Hezekiah refuses to comply with the demand. The Assyrian generals retire, and rejoin their master, who is warring against Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia. Smitten by the angel of the Lord, in accordance with the prediction of Isaiah, one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian warriors perish in a single night, and Sennacherib returns to Nineveh, where he is assassinated by two of his sons.

The contents of these two chapters and of the two which follow them are almost word for word the same as the corresponding narratives in the Book of Kings,¹ with the exception that the poetical piece described as “the writing of Hezekiah” is not contained in Kings. In other respects the narrative in the Book of Kings is somewhat fuller, and it looks as if the compiler of “Isaiah” abridged a portion of that book relating to the history of the prophet, and introduced it here. We are, however, in the same uncertainty as to the original relation between these parallel passages as we are in similar cases elsewhere. Possibly both passages may have been founded upon some original memoirs of Isaiah.

The comparison of these chapters with the Assyrian inscriptions affords an illustration of a remark already quoted as to the relation between the two records.² The general outlines of the Bible narrative are fully confirmed by the inscriptions, but it is impossible to harmonize the Jewish and Assyrian dates. According to the inscriptions it was Sargon and not Sennacherib who was king of Assyria in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (711 B.C.). According to the same authority Sargon did actually invade Palestine about that time, and besieged Ashdod;³ and there is some evidence to show that he also made war on Judah. Sennacherib did not come to the throne until 705 B.C., and the inscriptions place his invasion of Judea

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 13, to xx. 19. See p. 77.² See p. 153.³ See Isaiah xx. 1.

in 701 B.C., which would be the twenty-seventh year of Hezekiah's reign. It would appear that the Jewish compiler, living some time after the events, confused the records which came down to him. If it be asked why we prefer to accommodate the Jewish chronology to the Assyrian, and not *vice versâ*, the answer is that the Assyrian chronology is, in the present instance, more likely to be correct, as the inscriptions were contemporaneous with the reigns of the kings to which they relate, and the dates are checked by many parallel records. The narrative in Kings looks as if there had been some confusion in it.¹

Hezekiah's Illness.

(Is. xxxviii.)

Hezekiah is "sick unto death," and Isaiah warns him that he must die. Moved by the king's prayer, Jehovah commissions the prophet to inform him that he shall be allowed to live for fifteen years more, and as a sign that the promise will be fulfilled, causes the shadow to go back ten degrees upon the sun-dial of Ahaz. Isaiah directs the application of a cake of figs to the boil from which the king is suffering, and Hezekiah recovers.

The chapter also contains the "writing," or thanksgiving-psalm, of Hezekiah on the occasion of his recovery, "a peculiarly sweet and plaintive specimen of Hebrew psalmody."²

An Embassy from Babylon.

(Is. xxxix.)

On the recovery of Hezekiah from his illness, Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon, sends an embassy with a present to congratulate him. Hezekiah welcomes the ambassadors, and shows them his treasures and his armoury. Isaiah fearlessly condemns the conduct of the king, and tells him that the day will come when the treasures of his house shall be carried away to Babylon, and his sons shall become attendants in the palace of the king of Babylon.

The real object of Merodach Baladan's embassy was probably to bring about an alliance with Judah for the purpose of resisting

¹ Compare 2 Kings xviii. 15, 16, with 17.

² T. K. Cheyne. *The Prophecies of Isaiah.* *In loc.*

Assyria. It would be in accordance with the line which Isaiah took on other occasions to oppose any such alliance.

The Triumphant Return of the Jews from Babylon, and the Restoration of the Worship of Jehovah on Mount Zion.

Most, if not all, of the remainder of the book appears to have been the composition of a writer who lived about the time of the Return. It does not speak of the Captivity as future, but as having already actually occurred; and it differs in style from the earlier parts of the book. Those who believe that all the prophecies in this collection must have been composed by Isaiah suppose that he prophetically anticipated the circumstances of the Captivity, and wrote these concluding chapters from the point of view of one living with the exiles in Babylon on the eve of the Return.

(Is. xl.)

The prophet is commissioned to bring tidings of consolation to the people of God :—“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” Let the way be prepared, let the rugged wilderness become a level road, let every valley be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low, for Jehovah is returning to Mount Zion, and will make His glory manifest to all flesh. How faithful are his promises! The generations of men pass away, they fade like the flowers of the field; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.¹ Glad tidings for Jerusalem! Her God is coming with might, and will take her children to His arms again. He is indeed the Almighty One, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, the Ruler of the nations, not like the idols of the heathen, mere stocks of wood or stone. They that have Him for their God shall never be forsaken, and need never despair :—

“ Hast thou not known?
Hast thou not heard,
That the everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Fainteth not, neither is weary?

¹ Comp. Ps. cii., and see p. 182.

There is no searching of his understanding.
He giveth power to the faint ;
And to them that have no might he increaseth strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall :
But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength ;
They shall mount up with wings as eagles ;
They shall run, and not be weary ;
And they shall walk, and not faint.”

(Is. xlii.—xlv.)

The prophet continues to dilate upon the same theme, returning again and again to the leading thoughts. Cyrus, who is mentioned by name, is the instrument by whom the great deliverance is to be effected. Through his agency Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be rebuilt, and the foundations of the Temple laid again. It is for this purpose that he has been raised up. He is a terror to the nations and their false gods; but Israel is the Servant of Jehovah, and need not be afraid, though she be sometimes chastised for her sins. The contrast between the One Living God and the senseless idols of the heathen is the subject of many striking passages, in some of which the power and majesty of the Almighty are finely described, and the vanity of the idol-gods exhibited with much sarcastic force. In this connexion the prophet frequently appeals to the truth and foreknowledge of the Almighty, as shown by the fulfilment of His promises to Jerusalem, and proclaims the futility of the predictions of the heathen soothsayers.

(Is. xlvi.—xlviii.)

Bel and Nebo, the deities of Babylon, are specially mentioned. They are described as borne away by the victors, a heavy load, “a burden to the weary beast.”

Babylon, the virgin city, the tender and delicate daughter of the Chaldaeans, shall go into captivity as a common slave. There is no longer a throne for the lady of kingdoms, she must sit in silent obscurity.

The Lord has mercy upon Israel, in spite of her past transgressions, and leads her away rejoicing from the land of her captivity.

*The same subject continued—The Restoration of the People of God :
The Servant of Jehovah ; Necessary Judgments.*

The Servant of Jehovah has already been mentioned in the preceding section. The meaning of this expression has been the subject of much difference of opinion. It has been maintained by many that when the prophetical writer uses it he means simply to personify the people of Israel, or the best part of the nation—the ideal Israel as distinguished from the actual. Others have supposed that the reference is to the prophetical body; or even to some individual prophet, to himself, or to the prophet Jeremiah. But whatever degree of truth there may be in any of these views, no one of them by itself affords a satisfactory key to the meaning of the whole series of passages relating to the Servant of Jehovah.¹ The expression is at first certainly used of Israel, without any hint that it is limited to the ideal Israel. It is equally certain that the description of the Servant of Jehovah, which is afterwards given, is not applicable to the actual Israel. Much is also to be said for the idea that in some of the passages the writer of them had the prophets or one of the prophets in view. But whatever points of contact may be found between these descriptions and the people or persons actually existing at the time when they were written, and however true it may be that the thought of the writer began with the people of his own day and their prophetical leaders, it would appear from the simplest exegesis of the text that his mind gradually rose from its first thoughts, until it arrived at the conception of an ideal Person—an individual Redeemer of Israel and of all mankind.

(Is. XLIX.)

Proclamation to all lands that the Servant of the Lord is a chosen instrument for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, not only to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, but to be a light to the Gentiles and salvation to the ends of the earth. Though the Servant is disheartened, though Zion thinks that her God has forsaken her, the promises shall not fail. The despised and rejected shall be honoured by kings. The prisoners shall come forth, and their sorrows shall be over; they shall not hunger or thirst any

¹ See Is. xli. 8–20; xlii. 1–7, 19; xliii. 10; xliv. 1, 2, 21; xlv. 4; xlvi. 20; xl ix. 1–12; lii. 13–15; liii.

more, for their God shall supply every want, and guard them from every danger. His love is lasting, surpassing even a mother's love. The waste and desolate places shall be inhabited again—shall be too narrow for their inhabitants, for Israel shall increase and the Gentiles shall come in.

A chapter full of pathetic eloquence.

(Is. L.)

It was Israel's own doing that the Lord had rejected her. When He offered His all-powerful aid, none would accept it. The patient Servant of the Lord shall be justified.

(Is. LI.)

The Lord comforts Zion. In answer to the prophet's appeal, He assures her that she need not fear ; no oppressor can stand before Him. Jerusalem has drunk to the full the cup of affliction ; but now it shall be taken from her, and put into the hand of them that oppressed her.

(Is. LII. 1-12.)

Let Jerusalem arise from the dust and put on her beautiful garments; for her captivity is over, the days of her mourning are ended. How beautiful upon the mountains is the coming of the messenger that brings the glad tidings ! At his approach the watchmen lift up their voices together. Let their cry be taken up by the city :—

“ Break forth into joy,
Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem :
For the Lord hath comforted His people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.”

But they that are to occupy the new Jerusalem must touch no unclean thing.

(Is. LII. 13-LIII.)

The humiliation and sorrows of the Servant of Jehovah, His vicarious suffering, His final victory :—

He is despised and rejected of men ;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief :
And we hid as it were our faces from Him ;
He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

And yet

He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ;

though

We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted :

for

He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities :

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him ;

And with His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray ;

We have turned every one to his own way ;

And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

But in spite of contempt and oppression, even though death itself be allowed to do its worst against Him, He shall attain a final victory. His soul shall be an effectual offering for the sins of those for whom He dies, and He shall yet live to see the fruit of His sufferings.

He shall see His seed,

He shall prolong His days,

And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

(Is. LIV.)

A song of joy for Zion. The desolate mother hath many children, the forsaken wife is reconciled to her husband ; for Zion's husband is the **Lord** of Hosts, her Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel :—

“ O thou afflicted,

Tossed with tempest,

And not comforted !

Behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours,

And lay thy foundations with sapphires.

And I will make thy windows of agates,

And thy gates of carbuncles,

And all thy borders of pleasant stones.

And thy children shall be taught of the **Lord** ;

And great shall be the peace of thy children.

In righteousness shalt thou be established :
 Thou shalt be far from oppression ;
 For thou shalt not fear :
 And from terror ;
 For it shall not come near thee."

(Is. LV.)

A loving invitation to all who feel the need of it, to come and share the Lord's salvation :—

Ah ! every one that thirsteth,
 Come ye to the waters ;
 And he that hath no money,
 Come ye, buy and eat ;
 Yea, come, buy wine and milk
 Without money, and without price.

Let the wicked forsake his way,
 And the unrighteous man his thoughts ;
 And let him return unto the Lord,
 And He will have mercy upon him ;
 And to our God,
 For He will abundantly pardon.

(Is. LVI. 1-8.)

The foreigners who have become converts to the faith of Jehovah, and the Jews who have been forced to become eunuchs in the palaces of their captors, need not think that they are to be excluded from the coming blessings.¹ The salvation is for every one that keeps the law and practises righteousness.

(Is. LVI. 9-LVII.)

The faithless and self-indulgent pastors are threatened. The people are severely reprobated for their licentious and cruel idolatries ; their heaps of idols cannot deliver them. To those who transgress life is a troubled sea, but in the service of Jehovah is a haven of rest.

¹ Comp. Deut. xxiii. 1-8 : Neh. xiii. 1-3.

Supposed by some to be a quotation from a prophet who lived in Palestine before the exile.

(Is. LVIII.)

The formalism of the people is condemned. The fast which the Almighty chooses is to abstain from sin—to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free. The Sabbath also should be rightly observed.

(Is. LIX.)

The Lord's hand is not shortened that He cannot save; but the iniquities of His people have separated them from Him. Their hands are defiled with blood, their lips have spoken lies; therefore they are far from the happy state of the righteous. But when there is no one else to help, the Lord himself comes to the rescue of His people.

(Is. LX.)

A song of the glory of Zion :—

“Arise, shine: for thy light is come,
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

Her sons return from afar. The caravans throng the approaches to Jerusalem. Like clouds of doves flying to the dove-cot, the Gentiles come from all lands, bearing rich offerings to the temple. The walls are rebuilt. Prosperity and peace shall prevail.

“Thy sun shall no more go down;
Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself:
For the Lord shall be thine everlasting light,
And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

(Is. LXI.)

The Restoration of Zion. The wounds of the broken-hearted are to be bound up, and the captives set free; the ruins are to be rebuilt, and joy to take the place of sorrow.

Perhaps spoken in the person of the Servant of Jehovah.

(Is. LXII.)

The righteousness of Zion shall shine as a light to the nations. She that was called Forsaken and Desolate shall be known by another name. She shall be called Sought out, A city not forsaken.

(Is. LXIII. 1-6.)

The vengeance of Jehovah is described in a dramatic dialogue between the prophet and the Mighty Warrior who is returning victorious from Edom, having trampled His enemies under His feet.

(Is. LXIII. 7-LXIV.)

An humble supplication to the Almighty, recalling His mercies of old time, and His often-tried patience, and praying that He would now appear on the side of His people. The suppliants freely acknowledge that they cannot claim the interference as a right :—

“ We are all as an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ;
And we all do fade as a leaf ;
And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Their wretched condition is their only plea :—

Thy holy cities are a wilderness,
Zion is a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.

Our holy and beautiful house,
Where our fathers praised Thee,
Is burned up with fire :
And all our pleasant things are laid waste.

(Is. LXV.)

Carelessness and idolatry have called for punishment. But Jehovah will have mercy upon a remnant. Still the disobedient must be destroyed. They shall have no share in the coming blessings. The glories of the Messianic time are described.

(Is. LXVI.)

The Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth requires no Temple built by the hand of man. His delight is in humble worshippers ;

not in the formal sacrifices of sinners. He will bring peace and blessing to Jerusalem; but those that rebel against Him, whether faithless Jews or foreign enemies, shall be consigned to endless torments.

Arrangement of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

A glance over the preceding Analysis will show that the collection of prophecies may be roughly divided into three parts, the first relating to the chastening dealings of the Almighty with His chosen people, the second containing His judgments on foreign nations, and the concluding part describing the glorious future.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

TITLE.

"THE WORDS OF JEREMIAH THE SON OF HILKIAH, OF THE PRIESTS THAT WERE IN ANATHOTH IN THE LAND OF BENJAMIN: TO WHOM THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME IN THE DAYS OF JOSIAH THE SON OF AMON KING OF JUDAH, IN THE THIRTEENTH YEAR OF HIS REIGN. IT CAME ALSO IN THE DAYS OF JEHOIAKIM THE SON OF JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH, UNTO THE END OF THE ELEVENTH YEAR OF ZEDEKIAH THE SON OF JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH, UNTO THE CARRYING AWAY OF JERUSALEM CAPTIVE IN THE FIFTH MONTH."

Date of Jeremiah.

A LONG interval of time separates Isaiah from Jeremiah. Hezekiah was the last king in whose reign Isaiah prophesied; and from the death of Hezekiah to the thirteenth year of Josiah, in which year the commencement of Jeremiah's public ministry is dated, is, according to the chronology of the Books of Kings, exactly seventy years. It will help to fix Jeremiah's date in the mind when we add that from the same thirteenth year of Josiah to the destruction of the city was exactly forty years more. Jeremiah's public ministry did not come to an end with the destruction of Jerusalem. He remained in Judaea as the adviser of the remnant that was left there. By them he was carried into Egypt when they fled from Judaea for fear of the Chaldees. In Egypt he still continued to exercise his prophetic ministry, and some of his prophecies are interesting, as throwing light upon the state of the Jews in that country.

Personal History of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah belonged to a priestly family, and was born at Anathoth, a village not far from Jerusalem, in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. When he began his ministry he was young. He speaks of himself as a child,¹ but it is not likely that we are to understand this expression literally. Jerusalem was the scene of his labours, and some of his addresses were delivered to the people assembled in the court of the temple. When it became evident that the Jews could no longer resist the power of Babylon, Jeremiah was one of those who counselled submission, and, like Isaiah, he steadily protested against trusting to the support of Egypt. By his continued advocacy of this policy he provoked the bitter hostility of the Egyptian party, from whom he suffered much persecution. His complaints against his enemies, and his lamentations over the mournful prospects of his country, give a melancholy hue to the idea of his character which we derive from his prophecies. But some incidents in his career show that he was not deficient in courage and determination. If he had bitter enemies, he also had staunch friends. Foremost among the latter were the two brothers Baruch and Seraiah. The name of Baruch especially is closely associated with that of Jeremiah. He assisted the prophet in his labours, frequently acting as his amanuensis, and sharing his dangers in Jerusalem. He went down to Egypt with Jeremiah; and an affecting address of the prophet to his faithful friend, in which he laments the failure of their efforts on behalf of Judaea, and warns Baruch not to expect great things for himself, is placed in the Book of

¹ Jer. i. 6.

Prophecies in connexion with the migration into Egypt.¹ Tradition says that the Book of the Prophecies was put together by Baruch. Ahikam the son of Shaphan the high priest, and Ebedmelech, an "Ethiopian" in the service of the court, are also mentioned among those who took the side of Jeremiah, and rendered him valuable service on more than one occasion. Jeremiah is believed to have died in Egypt, but we have no certain record on the subject. We may hope that there is no truth in the tradition, which we find in a later age, that he was stoned to death by his countrymen.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

Introduction.

(JER. I. 1-3.)

The Title of the Book. It speaks of the prophecies as extending only to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah. We have already mentioned that a part of the book belongs to a later date than this. It may be that the title belongs to an earlier and less complete edition, or that what occurred after the destruction of the city is looked on as comparatively insignificant.

(JER. I. 4-19.)

The call of Jeremiah to the office of prophet. Isaiah vi., and Ezekiel i.-iii. may be compared.

The Prophet's Mission to the People of Judah.

(JER. II.-III. 5.)

A complaint of the unfaithfulness of Israel. They have forgotten the Lord their God, who brought them up out of Egypt, and have forsaken Him for other gods, changing the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. Judah shall be ashamed of her affection for Egypt, as she was formerly ashamed of Assyria.

¹ Jer. xlvi.

“Israel” is here used in the more general sense. In the next section it means the Northern Kingdom only.

(JER. III. 6–VI.)

Judah has not taken warning by the fate of Israel. And yet Israel was not so bad as Judah is now. Though Israel has been long in captivity, the Almighty has not lost His love for her, and there is yet hope that she may acknowledge her transgressions, and be restored to favour. But against obdurate Judah a terrible evil is coming. From the north the destroyer is on his way to lay waste her cities, and make her land desolate. Still she will not learn. There is neither justice nor truth in Jerusalem. The people are without understanding, and their leaders are wilfully blind.

This section is dated in the days of Josiah. The enemy from the north may be the Seythians, who about this time invaded Asia and conquered the Medes.¹ Others think that the reference is to the Chaldaeans, as the Seythians are not mentioned by the Jewish historians.

(JER. VII.–X.)

An address to the people of Judah delivered at the gate of the Temple. The worshippers are not to trust in the Temple, or in burnt offerings or sacrifices. They are to amend their lives, to cease from oppression and bloodshed, to obey the commands of God, to give up idolatry; and then it will be well with them. But because they have refused to amend, and boast themselves of the Book of the Law, and “have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there was no peace” (perhaps an allusion to Josiah’s reformation), therefore their land is (or will be) in the possession of the invader. The prophet bitterly laments the condition of his people.

There is no date to this powerful address, but it looks like a fuller report of one which, in a later section, is connected with the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, and the public delivery of which nearly cost Jeremiah his life.²

(JER. XI.–XIII.)

The unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah to the Divine Covenant, and their frequent idolatries. As it is now with Judah, so it has always

¹ See a section on “*The Seythians in Asia*,” in Chap. XXIV.

² Jer. xxvi.

been with them. It is of little avail that the prophet sees the truth. He only provokes hostility by declaring it. Even his own townsmen at Anathoth seek his life. But God will yet vindicate His name. The judgment of Judah shown by the two types of the marred girdle, and the bottles filled with wine. The girdle is hidden away upon the banks of the Euphrates, and is worthless. The people are filled with the wine of folly and madness.

(JER. XIV.-XVII.)

Lamentations and forebodings on the occasion of a succession of dry seasons. Jeremiah complains of the false prophets who "prophesy lies" in the name of the Lord. He complains of the persecution to which he is exposed:—"Every-one curses" him; he is a man of strife and contention to the whole earth. The Jews must be utterly cast out of their own land. Still through all there is hope. If they will but be obedient and keep the Sabbath day, the city may yet stand.

(JER. XVIII.-XX.)

The clay in the hand of the potter represents God's power over the house of Israel. The potter's vessel being broken is a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. The deviles of Jeremiah's enemies. He is beaten and put in the stocks by the overseer of the Temple, upon whom he pronounces a fearful doom. He complains bitterly of the treatment which he receives, and curses the day of his birth.

(JER. XXI.-XXIV.)

On the occasion of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion Zedekiah sends to consult Jeremiah. The prophet predicts the captivity of Jerusalem, and advises submission to the Chaldaeans. Has not the coming judgment on the royal house of David been visible in the mournful fate of the three preceding kings? Nevertheless a righteous king shall yet reign and prosper on the throne of David. The prophets, too, have failed, and the priests, and they shall be brought to shame. By the type of the good and bad figs the prophet declares that it is better for those Jews who have already gone to Babylon than for those who have remained in Jerusalem or have taken refuge in Egypt; for the latter shall be utterly scattered into all the kingdoms of the earth.

(JER. XXV.)

The seventy years' captivity in Babylon. The punishment of the Chaldaeans, when the seventy years are expired, and the general judgment of the nations. Dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the first of Nebuchadnezzar.

(JER. XXVI.)

"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim" Jeremiah narrowly escapes being put to death by the priests and false prophets for announcing the destruction of the Temple. He is saved by his friend Ahikam and other influential persons. The danger was serious, for another prophet, Urijah, lost his life in the same reign for a similar offence.

(JER. XXVII., XXVIII.)

In opposition to the false prophets Jeremiah warns the nations, through their representatives at Jerusalem, of the futility of the attempt to resist Nebuchadnezzar. Their only hope is to submit quietly, and then they may be left in their own countries. The false prophet Hananiah, who contradicts Jeremiah in the Temple, dies the same year in accordance with Jeremiah's word.

In the dating of this section Jehoiakim is apparently a mistake for Zedekiah.

(JER. XXIX.)

Jeremiah writes to the Jews that have been already carried into captivity to tell them to look on Babylon as their appointed resting-place for the present, and not to listen to the delusive hopes held out by the false prophets. Their brethren in Judah shall bitterly regret that they have not listened to his advice. He predicts the terrible fate of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, two false prophets, whom the king of Babylon "roasted in the fire." The name of Shemaiah, who advised the imprisonment of Jeremiah, shall perish, because he "taught rebellion against the Lord."

(JER. XXX., XXXI.)

The return of Israel and Judah, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Lord will make a new covenant with His people.

(JER. XXXII.)

While Jerusalem is besieged by the Chaldaeans, Jeremiah, who is in prison, buys his cousin's field in Anathoth, and deposits the evi-

dence of his purchase in a secure place, thus showing his faith in his own assertion that "houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land," which is now in the hands of the Chaldaeans.

A similar incident is related by Livy as having taken place during Hannibal's campaign in Italy, when a Roman citizen bought at its full price the piece of ground upon which Hannibal's camp was pitched.

(JER. XXXIII.)

Jeremiah in prison again asserts the certain fulfilment of the Divine promises to Jerusalem.

(JER. XXXIV. 1-7.)

When the huge host of Nebuchadnezzar advances against Jerusalem, Jeremiah assures Zedekiah that the city will fall, and that the king shall be taken captive himself, but that he shall not be put to death.

(JER. XXXIV. 8-22.)

Jeremiah denounces the wealthy Jews who held their brethren in service for debt. Though the law compelled them to let the debtors go free at the end of seven years, they evaded its provisions by again reducing them to bondage.

(JER. XXXV.)

By the example of the Rechabites, who had kept the vows of their ancestor Jonadab the son of Rechab, Jeremiah reproves the inconstancy of the Jews. Date—"In the days of Jehoiakim."

(JER. XXXVI.)

Jeremiah, being unable to go to the Temple himself, gets Baruch to read his prophecies to the people on the fast day. Jehoiakim, hearing of this, sends for the manuscript, and as soon as he sees the nature of its contents, throws it into the fire. He issues an order to have Jeremiah and Baruch arrested. But they cannot be found. Jeremiah directs Baruch to write another roll, and to add more prophecies to it.

(JER. XXXVII.-XXXIX.)

A narrative of events affecting Jeremiah during Zedekiah's reign. The advance of an Egyptian army compels the Chaldaeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah warns the king that the relief is only temporary, and that the Chaldaeans will return again. Jeremiah leaving the city when the besiegers had retired, is seized by a Jewish

officer as a deserter to the Chaldaeans, and is beaten and thrown into prison. The king secretly consults him, and mitigates the severity of his imprisonment. But through the influence of his enemies he is thrown into a dismal dungeon, where his life is in danger. He is saved by Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian, who gets the king's permission to take him out of the dungeon. The king again secretly consults the prophet, only to be told, as before, that the only chance is to submit to the Chaldaeans. When the city is at length taken, Jeremiah is treated with respect by the Chaldaeans. He is allowed to stay with the remnant of the people in Judæa. Gedaliah, the son of his old friend Ahikam, is appointed governor over them, and Jeremiah is committed to his care.

(JER. XL.-XLIII.)

After the departure of the Chaldaeans the people who had escaped begin to settle down again in the country, and things begin to look a little brighter. But Gedaliah is foully murdered by Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah. In alarm the people resolve to flee into Egypt for fear of the Chaldaeans. Jeremiah attempts to dissuade them, but in vain. They carry Jeremiah and Baruch down to Egypt with them. Jeremiah in Egypt threatens the Egyptians with an invasion of the Chaldaeans.

(JER. XLIV.)

A denunciation of the Jews in Egypt for their idolatries. They refuse to reform. Jeremiah repeats his denunciation, and threatens the Egyptian king with the fate of Zedekiah.

The date of this section must be considerably later than the time referred to in the preceding one.

(JER. XLV.)

Jeremiah's mournful warning to Baruch that he is not to seek "great things" for himself. In the general calamity it will be enough for him that the Almighty gives him his own life "for a prey" in all places whither he goes.

This chapter may have originally stood as an appendix to the collection of prophecies mentioned in chapter xxxvi. Its insertion in its present place is probably intended to bring it into connexion with Baruch's removal to Egypt.

Warnings to the Gentiles.

(JER. XLVI. 1.)

Under the general heading “against the Gentiles” a number of prophecies against foreign nations are here brought together, though they belong to various dates.

(JER. XLVI. 2–12.)

“Against Egypt.” The defeat by the Chaldaeans of an Egyptian army at Carchemish on the Euphrates “in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.” Carchemish was probably taken by Pharaoh Necho soon after the battle of Megiddo, and held by the Egyptians until their defeat. After this the Egyptian cause declined, and they were forced back to their own country.¹

(JER. XLVI. 13–28.)

“How Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, should come and smite the land of Egypt.”

No date. There is another somewhat similar prophecy in ch. xliii., where it is placed in a different chronological connexion.

(JER. XLVII.)

“The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.” This title, which appears to refer the prophecy to an Egyptian attack on Gaza is hard to reconcile with the prophecy itself, which speaks of the enemy as coming “out of the north.” It is possible, but not likely, that the defeated Egyptian army returning from Carchemish may have taken Gaza on its way. But even so, the Egyptians would hardly be described as a flood “rising up out of the north.”

(JER. XLVIII.)

“Against Moab.” The Moabites had often been threatened already.² The present prophecy, which shows an acquaintance with the language of that in Isaiah, describes the spoiling and destruction of the country, but ends with the promise that the Lord will “bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days.”

¹ See p. 79.

² Amos ii. 1–3 : Is. xv. ; xvi. ; xxv. 10–12.

(JER. XLIX. 1-6.)

“Concerning the Ammonites,” who had occupied the territory of the tribe of Gad, when the latter were carried away by the Assyrians, as if Israel had “no heirs.”¹ But an alarm of war shall be heard by Rabbah of the Ammonites, and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire. “Then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the Lord.” Like the Moabites, the Ammonites also shall be restored “afterwards.”

(JER. XLIX. 7-22.)

“Concerning Edom.” The far-famed wisdom of Teman (an Edomite town or district) will not save her; nor her home in the clefts of the rocks. “Edom shall be a desolation.”

The resemblances between this prophecy and that of Obadiah² are considered in the section on the date and composition of Obadiah.

(JER. XLIX. 23-27.)

“Concerning Damascenus,” which shall share in the general judgment of the nations. She shall be wasted with fire and sword.

(JER. XLIX. 28-33.)

“Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote.” Hazor, which is here placed with Kedar, can hardly be the city of Hazor in the north of Palestine, though the name may have been the reason why this piece was put next to that about Damascenus. We are probably to understand by it some tribe or district of nomad Arabs. The tranquil nation “that dwelleth without care,” “which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone,” shall see their camels made a booty, and their multitudes of sheep a spoil, and they shall be scattered “into all winds,” and Hazor shall be a dwelling for wild creatures, and “a desolation for ever.”

(JER. XLIX. 34-39.)

“The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah.” The bow of Elam shall be broken, and they shall be scattered to the four winds of heaven. But in the latter days the Lord will bring again the cap-

¹ See 2 Kings xv. 29; and compare Amos i. 13-15.

² Obad. 1-9.

tivity of Elam. The offence of Elam, an Eastern people, may have been that they took some special part in the Chaldaean invasions.¹

(JER. L., LI.)

“Against Babylon.” “For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate.” In chap. li., apparently a second prophecy, the enemy is more expressly defined:—“The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes” against her. An appendix attributes these two prophecies to Jeremiah in the reign of Zedekiah. He is said to have sent them to Babylon with directions to the bearer to bind a stone to the volume, and cast it into the Euphrates. Thus should “Babylon sink” and not rise again.

At the end of chapter li. occur the words “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.”

Concluding Chapter.

(JER. LII.)

An account of the Chaldaean invasion in the reign of Zedekiah, and the capture of the city, also of the favourable treatment of Jehoiachin in captivity by Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon. Jeremiah's name is not mentioned in this section, which is almost identical with the conclusion of the Second Book of Kings.

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and Criticism.

When and how was the present collection of prophecies put together? and how far do its contents represent the actual utterances of Jeremiah? These are the most important questions with which the critics of this book have busied themselves.

The account which is given of Baruch writing from the lips of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, all the public utterances of the prophet up to that date, leads to two valuable conclusions: first, that writing was employed

¹ See Is. xxii. 6, &c.

to preserve the prophecies of Jeremiah from his own dictation, and, secondly, that at least one collection of his prophecies was made in the prophet's lifetime.¹ When we further read that, on these prophecies being written out a second time by Baruch, there were added to them "many like words," we are naturally led to the second inference, that the published editions of the prophecies may have been enlarged or re-arranged, or otherwise altered from time to time.² There is therefore nothing unlikely in Ewald's conjecture that Jeremiah employed his leisure time after the destruction of Jerusalem in editing a collection of the prophecies that he had delivered during the last years of the monarchy, and that this collection forms the basis of the present work; or, again, in the other conjecture that after the death of Jeremiah Baruch made a collection of his prophecies and of other historical pieces relating to his ministry. But however reasonable these conjectures may be, they are only conjectures. There is something more satisfactory in the general consent of critics that, whoever put the book together, or whatever was the design of its present arrangement, the great bulk of it represents the prophecies of Jeremiah as they were delivered by him, and contemporary records of his life. But on the other hand it is impossible to deny that the present book may contain later additions or alterations.³ The remarkable variations between the Hebrew text and that of the Septuagint, both in matter and arrangement, show either the great uncertainty of the text or the liberties which were taken with the book, even after its admission to the Canon of Holy Scripture.

¹ Jer. xxxvi. 1–26.

² Jer. xxxvi. 27–32.

³ Jer. x. 1–16, xxx.–xxxiii., l., li., are supposed to show signs of later workmanship. With Jer. l., li., compare Is. xiii., xxxiv., &c.

The Lamentations.

In our Bibles the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah is followed by a short book entitled “The Lamentations of Jeremiah.” In the Hebrew Bible these Lamentations occupy a different place, and they are not connected with the name of Jeremiah. But in the Septuagint they are placed as in our version, and described as the Lamentations with which Jeremiah “sat in tears and lamented over Jerusalem” after her capture and desolation.¹ Each of the five chapters in this little book is a separate poem. The first four are alphabetical acrostics in the Hebrew. To some it may appear as if this artificial style of composition were not suited to subjects so mournful, and as if the use of it implied a want of reality in the feelings expressed. But the same objection might be made to the use of any art at all in connexion with such themes. It will be appropriate to quote the words in which the writer of another Lamentation speaks of the careful art with which he elaborated his work, until it became one of the most finished poems of the English language:—

“ I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel ;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

 But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies ;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.”

These elegies dwell upon the sorrowful fate of the fallen city, and recall, as with the accurate memory of an eye-witness, the troubles that preceded its downfall. “They

¹ Modern criticism questions Jeremiah’s authorship.

combine," wrote the late Dean Milman, "the truth of history with the deepest pathos of poetry"¹ :—

How doth the city sit solitary,
 That was full of people !
 How is she become as a widow !
 She that was great among the nations,
 And princess among the provinces,
 How is she become tributary !
 She weepeth sore in the night,
 And her tears are on her cheeks ;
 Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her :
 All her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
 They are become her enemies.²

It is in the latter part of the same chapter that we first meet with words which have become familiar to us from the Christian use of them in another connexion. The city speaks :—

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ?
 Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.³

The third of the Lamentations, in which the personal grief of the poet is the most prominent feature, will occasionally remind the reader of the Book of Job, and should also be read in connexion with the passages in the later part of "Isaiah" relating to the suffering Servant of Jehovah.

¹ *Jewish Hist.* Book viii., p. 191.

² Lam. i. 1, 2.

³ Lam. i. 12.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

The Prophet.

THE name of the prophet Ezekiel is not mentioned in the Historical Books. From the opening of the prophetic work which bears his name we learn that he dwelt “among the captives by the river of Chebar.” There “by the waters of Babylon” he had his home, and prophesied to his fellow-exiles, amongst whom he was held in high estimation both as a priest and prophet. Tradition says that he had come from Judaea amongst the captives who were carried away with King Jehoiachin; and the first date which is given in the book, the date of his prophetic call, is in the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity.¹ The latest date mentioned in the book is the twenty-seventh year of the same era.² Ezekiel was thus partly contemporary with, and partly later than Jeremiah.

The Book.

The chosen people, their sins and sorrows, their hopes and fears, are the principal subjects of the prophecies of Ezekiel, as they are of the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

¹ Ezek. i. 2. In the first verse the same year is called the thirtieth of another era, supposed by some to be the Babylonian era of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, who began to reign b.c. 625.

² Ezek. xxix. 17.

There are also some chapters relating to the nations outside, which were affected by the great changes of the time. The prophecies relating to foreign nations are grouped together by themselves in the middle of the book, as the corresponding prophecies are in the Book of Isaiah, and are followed, as in "Isaiah," by a third and last division of the book, in which the glorious future of Zion and the blessing of all nations through her instrumentality are predicted.

This similarity of arrangement seems to imply that the Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel were put together by literary workmen of the same school, or at least that they were arranged under the influence of the same ideas as to the construction of a prophetical work; and a few scholars have thought that they could discern in the Book of Ezekiel the productions of more writers than one. But the general opinion is in favour of unity of authorship. The book certainly does not exhibit the same marks of diversity of authorship as the two that precede it; the prophetical pieces are more uniform in style than in the Book of Isaiah, and there are no historical sections intermingled with them, as there are in both "Isaiah" and "Jeremiah." It has, moreover, been conjectured that the Book of Ezekiel may have been edited by the prophet himself. It is argued that the circumstances of Ezekiel's life, as compared with those of the two preceding prophets, would agree with this supposition. Isaiah and Jeremiah were men deeply engaged in public affairs at most exciting times. In the less eventful life of the captive settlement by the river of Chebar Ezekiel may have had more leisure for literary composition, and may have been more of a writer than a public man. When we know so little of the personal history of Ezekiel, there cannot be much

value in our conjectures as to what his occupations may have been ; but there appears no reason why he may not have himself edited this collection of prophetical writings in the later years of his life.

*Ezekiel's Prophecies about the Jews before the Destruction
of Jerusalem.*

(EZEKIEL I.—XXIV.)

After the usual preliminary account of his call to the prophetical office, Ezekiel immediately begins to announce the Divine will and purposes concerning his countrymen. But chiefly to Jerusalem and “the mountains of Israel,” and to the critical position of affairs there, his thoughts turn from the “plain” of his captivity. “His own home, where he dwelt with his wife, and guided the counsels of the small community of the Chebar, faded from his eyes. Across the rich garden of that fertile region, across the vast Euphrates, across the intervening desert, his spirit still yearned towards Jerusalem, still lived in the Temple courts, where once he had ministered. Though an exile he was still one with his countrymen.”¹ The subjects of these chapters are the siege of Jerusalem, the coming judgments, outspoken condemnation of the sins and idolatries of God’s people, fearless reproof of their presumptuous leaders and the false prophets, expostulation, like that of Jeremiah, against the folly of trusting to Egypt. His lamentations over the impending ruin of his country answer to those of Jeremiah at Jerusalem. “Each of the two prophets, without communicating with the other, is the echo of the other’s sorrow. Deep answers to deep across the Assyrian desert ; the depths of woe in him who,

¹ Stanley : *Jewish Church*, vol. ii., p. 56.

from the walls of Zion, saw the storm approaching, is equalled, if not surpassed, by the depths of woe in him who lived, as it were, in the skirts of the storm itself—the ‘whirlwind, the great cloud, the fire, unfolding itself from the north’;¹ gathering round the whole horizon before it reached the frontiers of Palestine.”²

The last of the prophecies in this division of the book is dated on the fatal day on which the army of the Chaldaæans laid siege to Jerusalem. The other dates which are given are also, no doubt, intended to connect the prophecies to which they are attached with important turns in the course of events. But unfortunately, from our imperfect knowledge of the time, these references are now entirely lost to us, or can be only matter of conjecture. We might suppose, from the example of Jeremiah sending messages to “them of the Captivity,” that the substance of these prophecies of Ezekiel was sent in a similar way to the Jews at Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's Prophecies concerning Foreign Nations.

(EZEK. XXV.—XXXII.)

In these chapters the prophet pronounces the doom of the other neighbouring nations that were subdued by the Babylonians; of the Ammonites and Moabites, the Edomites, the Philistines, of Tyre the mistress of the sea, and of her sister-city Sidon. Even Egypt must succumb to the irresistible power, as had the once powerful Assyria. Egypt shall lie waste and desolate; “no foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.”³

Three out of the eight chapters are taken up by a series

¹ Ezek. i. 4.

² Stanley: *ib.*

³ Ezek. xxix. 11–13.

of prophecies against Tyre and her neighbour Sidon, and four more by the series relating to Egypt. All of these prophecies are placed about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, with the exception of one against Egypt, which is dated about fifteen years later.¹ After the capture of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar invaded Phoenicia and besieged Tyre. The siege continued for thirteen years; but a passage in a later prophecy against Egypt implies that it was not successful,² and there is no historical record to show that the city was taken. It is certain that Egypt was menaced by the Babylonian power about the same time, but it has been a disputed question how far the threats of Ezekiel against Egypt were fulfilled. Ezekiel's predictions of the final destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar,³ and of the utter desolation of Egypt for forty years ought to be a sufficient warning to those who argue for the literal fulfilment of these prophecies.

The prophet's descriptions of the wealth and power of Tyre, and of her vast trade, are very striking, and, taken with the other pieces relating to the same subject, show that the Jews were much impressed by the commercial importance of the great seaport. In the prophecies against Egypt there is a fine passage, in which the downfall of Assyria is described as a warning to Pharaoh and his people. The Assyrian monarchy is compared to a mighty cedar fallen upon Lebanon. Once it was exalted above all the trees of the field; the birds of heaven lodged in its branches; beneath them the beasts of the earth brought forth their young, and the nations of the world were protected by its far-reaching shadow. But now its branches lie crushed and broken on the hill and in the valley, and by the rivers of the land. The fowls of

¹ Ezek. xxix. 17-21.

² Ezek. xxix. 18.

³ Ezek. xxvi. 7-11, &c.

heaven roost upon them, and the wild beasts hide beneath them as before, but their shade protects the nations no longer; “all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.”¹

*Prophecies concerning the Jews after the Destruction
of the City.*

(EZEK. XXXIII—XLVIII.)

When tidings of the destruction of Jerusalem reach the captives in the East, Ezekiel does not lose heart, but immediately re-commences his exhortations and instructions. His duty as the Lord’s watchman is not abrogated because the circumstances of the people are changed. The Almighty Shepherd is still watching over His flock, even through “the cloudy and dark day.” The enemies shall be judged, and Israel shall be gathered again from among the heathen. In the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones in the valley he sees the sure token of their restoration. By the symbol of the two sticks, which become one in his hand, he predicts the healing of the great schism in David’s kingdom. There shall be “one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel.” They shall not “defile themselves any more with their idols,” and “David” “shall be king over them.”

The Book concludes with a vision dated thirteen years later, in which the prophet sees the Temple and its services restored on a magnificent scale.² The measurements and particulars of the visioned Temple are drawn with the minutest care. The priests and their duties are described. A prince shall rule in righteousness. From the Temple shall flow a stream to water the land re-occupied by the

¹ Ezek. xxxi.

² Ezek. xl.—xlviii.

twelve tribes. Wherever that stream comes there shall be life. “And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

Style and Doctrine of Ezekiel.

The most striking characteristic of Ezekiel’s style is the frequent use which he makes of symbolism. Visions, types, parables, symbolical actions, are to be met with in almost every chapter. The first chapter affords a good example of his symbolie imagery, the well-known vision of the four living creatures, which aeeompanies “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God.” The idea of these creatures was perhaps derived by Ezekiel from the composite figures of animals, which recent exploration has shown to have been so common amongst the monuments of the East.

Ezekiel lays special emphasis on the doctrine of personal responsibility. “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” it and not another, is a text which he enforces with the greatest clearness :—“*The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*”¹ Nor does he shrink from applying this doctrine to himself, in respect to his prophetical office. The prophet is the Lord’s watchman, and if the watchman fail to sound the trumpet

¹ Ezek. xviii. 20.

at the approach of danger, the blood of those who are taken by surprise is on his head:—“*So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*”¹

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 7–9.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

The Narrative.

THIS remarkable book contains a narrative and a number of “visions” or “dreams.” It stands almost quite alone in the Old Testament, having nothing else exactly like it; though the narrative finds a parallel in the Book of Jonah, and the visions in Ezekiel approximate to those in the Book of Daniel. Most of the visions have but little connexion with the narrative, and occur in the form of an appendix at the end of the book. Only two of them, Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the great image, and the vision in which his own madness is foretold to him, are introduced into the narrative in the earlier part of the book.

The narrative portion tells of four Jewish captives brought from Judaea by King Nebuchadnezzar. In the land of their captivity they are exposed to many extraordinary trials, which they meet with undaunted constancy; but by the miraculous assistance of the Almighty they are delivered from them all, and Daniel, the chief of the four, rises to the highest place in the state, and retains his position under three successive dynasties. On their first arrival the captives refuse to defile themselves with the king’s meat, and ask to be allowed to live on pulse and water. On this spare diet they grow “fairer and fatter

than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Moreover, "in all matters of wisdom and understanding" the four Jewish captives are "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" that were in all the king's realm; and for recalling and interpreting a forgotten dream of the king, Daniel is made "ruler over the whole province of Babylon," and chief master of the wise men.

After this, the three companions of Daniel are cast into a burning fiery furnace for refusing to worship a golden image which the king had set up. But they are miraculously delivered. They walk unhurt through the midst of the furious flames, accompanied by a mysterious figure whose "form is like the Son of God," neither is "the smell of fire passed on them." Again and again Daniel interprets the signs of the future to the kings of Babylon. He has the courage to announce to Nebuchadnezzar the fit of madness by which he is to be humbled ; and in the midst of the splendour of Belshazzar's feast he declares to the vain king and his thousand lords that he is weighed in the balances and found wanting, that his days are numbered and his kingdom finished, and that his empire is soon to be taken by the Medes and Persians.

In the reign of Darius the Mede Daniel is cast into the den of lions for his faithfulness to the worship of his God, but the Lord sends His angel and shuts the mouths of the lions, and Daniel is delivered from this danger as his three companions were from the fire. He is taken from the den of lions and restored to his high position, which he retains to the end of a long life. Thenceforward "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

The Book of Daniel and History.

In the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel the names of Noah, Daniel, and Job are mentioned as familiar instances of distinguished servants of God. As it is hardly possible that the reference can be to the present Book of Daniel, it seems most probable that the name of Daniel was well known, and that the writer of the present book made use of it, and perhaps of traditions attached to it, just as the writer of the Book of Job may have made use of the name of a real person, or as the Book of Ecclesiastes was written in the person of Solomon. The Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus of the Book of Daniel are clearly intended for the well-known kings of those names. But no investigation of written history or monumental records has as yet enabled us to conjecture, with any degree of confidence, what kings the writer meant to describe under the names of Belshazzar or Darius the Mede.¹

The Visions of the Book of Daniel.

The main drift of the meaning of all the visions in the Book of Daniel is the same, namely, that when everything that sets itself up against the Almighty shall be put down, and when all the kingdoms of earth have run their course, then the Most High shall set up His Kingdom, and shall reign for ever and ever. It will thus be seen that, though the form of this book is so different from that of the other prophetical writings, its teaching is essentially the same as theirs. It is one more repetition, in a new form, of the old truths, "I know that all things come to an end, but

¹ See a pamphlet, *Notes on the Defence of the Book of Daniel.* (Dublin : Magee.)

Thy commandment is exceeding broad," and "O Thou that hearest the prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

The Four Kingdoms of the Book of Daniel.

The four kingdoms which are described in these visions as preceding the Kingdom of the Almighty have been the subject of much difference of opinion. If we are to allow ourselves to be guided by the early part of the book, in which the kingdom of Darius the Mede appears to be distinguished from that of Cyrus the Persian, we shall have no hesitation in supposing that the four kingdoms meant are those of the Chaldaeans, the Medes, the Persians, and the Greeks. This would be the simplest account of the matter, and a strong point in its favour is that all the kingdoms referred to would be actually mentioned by name in the book itself. The only objection to it is that no hint can be found, outside of this book, of the Medes having held any rule at Babylon between the dominion of the Chaldaeans and that of the Persians. That the last kingdom mentioned, the earthly horizon of the Book of Daniel, is the kingdom of the Greeks, is shown by the mention of Greece by name as the power by which the empire of Persia is destroyed, and by the exact correspondence of the description of the events immediately preceding the expected kingdom of God's people with those that actually took place under the successors of Alexander, especially the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, which led to the famous war of independence under the heroic leadership of the Maccabees.¹ This last fact has given rise to the opinion that "the Book of Daniel" was composed, or re-edited, in the time of the persecution by

¹ Dan. viii. 21-27; x. 20; xi.

Antiochus Epiphanes, with a view to stimulate the faith and courage of the Jews in their terrible struggle against his power.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead.

In the last chapter of the Book of Daniel we come to the most direct and unquestionable statement of the doctrine of a future life that is to be found in the Old Testament.¹ After the great tribulation, when the final deliverance shall have come, then “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

¹ Comp. 2 Macc. vii. 9, 14, 22, 23, &c.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

The Twelve Minor Prophets.

THIE title of these writings, which were regarded by the Jews as forming one book, is intended to distinguish them from the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who were called the three major prophets. The Book of Daniel was not counted in either collection; its place was in another part of the Hebrew Bible.¹ As their name indicates, these compositions are all comparatively short, the two longest, those, namely, which bear the names of Hosea and Zechariah, consisting of only fourteen chapters each; and the whole collection together does not occupy as many pages in the English Bible as the least of the greater prophetic books. In a few instances, but only in a few, they present the appearance of being composed of materials derived from different sources, like the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.²

Hosea.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME UNTO HOSEA THE SON OF BEERI, IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH, JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH KINGS OF JUDAH, AND IN THE DAYS OF JEROBOAM THE SON OF JOASH, KING OF ISRAEL."

If we do not suppose the opening chapters of this book to refer to actual experiences in the prophet's life—a suppo-

¹ The order of the Books in the English Version is that of the Septuagint.

² See the observations on Micah, Habakkuk, and Zechariah.

sition about which something will be said in a subsequent note, the title of the book is the only source of information which we possess about the personal history of Hosea.¹ And even the correctness of the title has been disputed, the length of time during which it makes the prophet's ministry to have continued having been made an objection to it. There is, however, nothing absolutely impossible in the supposition that Hosea prophesied under all the kings here mentioned. In the book itself there is no king of Israel or Judah mentioned by name; but there is a reference in the first chapter to "the House of Jehu," to which Jeroboam II. belonged. The promise that Judah should be saved, but not "by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen,"² looks like an allusion to the military successes of Jeroboam, after whose death the empire established by such means miserably collapsed. In the later chapters there are frequent allusions to Assyria and Egypt, and to the tendency of the people of Israel to rely on the support of these nations, which would agree very well with the state of things in the northern kingdom after the death of Jeroboam.

Analysis of the Book of Hosea.

The book begins abruptly with a description of the unhappy marriage of the prophet, and the unfaithfulness of his wife Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. She and her three children are made to typify the unfaithfulness of Israel and her sons to their covenant with the Almighty. As the prophet pleads with the erring woman, appealing to her through her children, and waiting lovingly till the vanity and disappointment of her sinful life drive her back to her home, so her Maker, who is her "husband,"³ pleads with Israel and waits for her,

¹ The name of the prophet is the same as that of the last king of Israel, which, in the Book of Kings, is more accurately translated Hoshea.

² Hos. i. 7.

³ Is. liv. 5.

until she grows weary of idolatry and sin, and returns to her God, that He may betroth her unto Him anew for ever "in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies."

After these typical representations in the first three chapters of the condition and prospects of the people whom the Almighty has called to be His own, there follows a series of appeals addressed directly to the people, which deal with the same subject, and which occupy the eleven remaining chapters of the book. In these addresses the prophet denounces the sins of his time with directness and energy:—"There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land," but "swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery": and one deed of bloodshed follows close upon another. High and low are alike bad: "they make the king glad with their wickedness and the princes with their lies." Even "the company of priests murder in the way" like a gang of highway robbers. Bethel, the centre of their worship, that was once the "House of God," is now Bethaven, the house of vanity and sin. But still, in spite of all, the true prophet does not give way to despair, and through this rugged composition there runs a series of passages of remarkable sweetness and pathos, and of undying hopefulness. The fundamental thought, the love of the husband for the wife, of Jehovah for His people, is never lost sight of. It appears again and again, interrupted though it be by accusation, by reproof, by threatening. It is the sole ground of hope. It was this love that called Israel out of Egypt in the beginning; it has often been sorely tried; "it punishes now in deep grief; but it can never deny its nature and fail; it will ever save, and one day must heal all evils."¹ The last chapter of Hosea is not to be surpassed for earnestness and tenderness of feeling by any passage in the prophetic books:—

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God;
For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord:
Say unto him, '*Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously:*
So will we render the calves of our lips.'²

¹ Ewald: *Prophets of the Old Testament*. Eng. trans., vol. i., p. 221.

² *i.e.* the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. Comp. Pss. li. 15-19; lxix. 39, 31.

*Asshur shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses :¹
 Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands. Ye are our gods :
 For in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

I will heal their backsliding,
 I will love them freely :
 For mine anger is turned away from him.

* * * * *

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ?—prudent, and he
 shall know them ?
 For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them :
 But the transgressors shall fall therein.”

The style of Hosea is rugged and abrupt; and, for the length of the book, it probably contains more obscure and uncertain passages than any other book of the Old Testament.

It is a disputed question whether the description in the earlier chapters of the prophet's relations with his wife represents a reality, or was merely an imaginary picture drawn by the prophet to illustrate the relation between Israel and her God. Ewald maintains the former view. He argues from the particularity with which the woman's name is given, and says that as she was probably dead when the prophet wrote the book long after, “he need not scruple to mention her name.” Bishop Wordsworth is also on the same side. He urges that the prophet was not directed to marry a wife who had already misconducted herself, but one who afterwards turned out to be unfaithful. He quotes Dr. Waterland:—“I understand here a wife which, *after* marriage, however chaste before, should prove false to her marriage vow ; and so the case of Hosea and Gomer might be the after-parallel to represent the case of God and His people Israel,” which “had become unfaithful *after* it had been espoused to Him.” On the other hand, it may be due to the abruptness of the style of this book that these narrations which appear to be spoken of actual facts, are really meant as descriptions of visions, or as parables. Elsewhere in the prophets there are narratives which appear to describe facts, but which cannot be accepted as literally true.

¹ i.e., we will not trust in Assyria nor in Egypt. Comp. Is. xxxi. 1 : Ps. xx. 7.

Joel.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME TO JOEL THE SON OF PETHUEL."

About the person of Joel we are even more in the dark than we are about Hosea. No Joel the son of Pethuel is mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. His propheey concerns Judah, and he is believed by many to have been the earliest of the Jewish canonical prophets. The most tangible argument in favour of this belief is drawn from the faet that he does not mention the Assyrians amongst the enemies of Judah, though he speaks of other hostile nations by name. This looks as if he wrote before the rise of the Assyrian power. Aeeording to another view, however, which finds favour with some modern scholars, the contents of the Book of Joel would better agree with the supposition that it was written after the Captivity.

Analysis of the Book of Joel.

The oecasion of the propheey which is contained in this book is the visitation of Judah by a plague of locusts, accompanied by severe droughts. A powerful description of this terrible infliction is given by the prophet. He speaks of it as if it had brought the kingdom to the verge of ruin. When these plagues had now lasted for more than one year, and the further continuance of them seemed to threaten the actual extinction of the people, the prophet appeals to his countrymen to turn to the Lord with penitence and prayer, if haply the impending doom may be averted. It would appear as if a day of public humiliation was held in answer to this appeal, and that a favourable change took place ; for we are told that "then the Lord was jealous for His land, and pitied His people";¹ that He answered them, and promised to send them the corn and the wine and the oil, and that He would remove far off from them the invading plague, that He would drive their resistless enemy into the desert, and there destroy him. In

¹ Joel ii. 18 (translation amended).

gratitude for this gracious deliverance the prophet breaks out into a joyful psalm of thanksgiving:—

“ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice :
For the Lord doeth great things.
Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field :
For the pastures of the wilderness do spring,
For the tree beareth her fruit,
The fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.”

The children of Zion are to “be glad and rejoice in the Lord” their God, for it is He that has wrought this favourable change; and He will continue it until their floors are full of wheat, and the vats overflow with wine and oil, and all the losses of the evil years are restored. Moreover, these temporal blessings are but types and earnest of the spiritual gifts that He has in store for His people; and so the prophet goes on to promise a great spiritual awakening, a day when the Lord will pour out His spirit upon all flesh, and all the Lord’s people shall be prophets. Still, along with this thought of a day of blessing, and inseparable from it, is another thought of a coming judgment, a judgment for “all nations” which shall be gathered in “the Valley of Jehoshaphat” to hear the Divine sentence. The prophecy concludes with the description of that great day of judgment and the justification of the righteous.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat.

It is not known whether the Valley of Jehoshaphat was a real or imaginary place. It is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, and as the word *Jehoshaphat* means “God judges,” or “Judgment of God,” it may have been merely used as an appropriate title of the imaginary scene of the coming judgment. The Valley of Jehoshaphat which may be seen in maps of the Holy Land lying to the east of Jerusalem, probably received its title in Christian, or later Jewish, times from this very passage. Ewald supposes that there may have been some real valley, though not that near Jerusalem, in which a heathen host had already been discomfited by King Jehoshaphat: and that the prophet pictures the future destruction of the hostile powers in the same place.

Amos.

"THE WORDS OF AMOS, WHO WAS AMONG THE HERDMEN OF TEKOAH, WHICH HE SAW CONCERNING ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND IN THE DAYS OF JEROBOAM THE SON OF JOASH KING OF ISRAEL, TWO YEARS BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE."

We learn from the title of the book which bears his name that Amos delivered his propheey in the time when Uzziah reigned in Judah simultaneously with Jeroboam II. in Israel, that is to say, at some time during the first half of Uzziah's long reign. He spoke therefore before Isaiah, and probably about the time of the commencement of Hosea's ministry, and at a time when both kingdoms were in a high state of prosperity, and when, as we learn from his propheey, prosperity had produced, in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes at least, many of those evils which commonly spring from it. The further statement, that Amos delivered his prophecy "two years before the earthquake," does not enable us to fix his date more closely, for we do not know in what year this earthquake occurred, though the terror which it occasioned is mentioned in another prophetical book.¹ We also learn from the contents of the book that Amos was a herdsman of Tekoa, a pastoral village in Judah, and that, though he had not received the usual prophet's training, he went with the Divine commission to warn the people of the northern kingdom of the judgment which they were provoking. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, misrepresenting his words to Jeroboam, compelled the messenger of God to return to Judah. It was in answer to Amaziah's taunt that he prophesied to earn his bread, that Amos explained that he was not a prophet by profession, but a herdsman, whom the Lord

¹ Zech. xiv. 5.

had sent upon this mission. It is remarked that the unusually large number of allusions to out-of-door country life in this book falls in well with the account which Amos gives of himself.¹

Analysis of the Book of Amos.

(AMOS I., II.)

The prophet begins by announcing the coming of judgment in words which also occur in the prophecy of Joel, and are perhaps here quoted from him, and which give point to the mention of the earthquake in the title:—

“The Lord will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem.”

The judgment will come upon the surrounding nations, upon Damascus, upon Gaza and the cities of the Philistines, upon Tyre, upon Edom, upon Ammon and Moab, upon Judah, and above all upon Israel, for Israel, so highly favoured, is now become the home of oppression, licentiousness, and idolatry.

(AMOS III.)

Though he belongs to Judah, the mission of Amos is to the “whole family” of Israel. He appeals to common sense in support of his threatenings. He calls on the nobles of Philistine and Egypt to testify to the crime and oppression in the palaces of Samaria. Therefore the winter house and the summer house shall be smitten, and the palaces of ivory shall perish.

(AMOS IV.)

The proud and luxurious women, “the kine of Bashan,” “which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink,” shall go into captivity from their ruined mansions. In bitter irony the prophet invites them to continue their idolatrous services at Bethel, and at Gilgal. Past trials have had no effect upon them. The famine and the drought, the failure of the crops,

¹ See ch. i. 3; ii. 13; iii. 4, 5; iv. 2, 7, 9; v. 8, 19; vi. 12; vii. 1; ix. 3, 9, 13, 14.

the locusts, all have been in vain. In vain have their warriors fallen, till the stench of the putrid corpses of their young men has filled the land. Israel must prepare to meet her God in a more terrible visitation.

(AMOS V.)

A lamentation for the house of Israel. “The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise.” She will not turn from the vanities of idolatry to the Almighty Maker of all things. Sacrifices and religious observances are not what He requires. “Let judgment run down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” But they shall go into captivity, and carry the idols that they have chosen with them.¹

(AMOS VI.)

Woe to the careless rulers at Zion, and in the mountains of Samaria! Carousing upon their couches of ivory “they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” But they shall go into captivity, and their banqueting shall have an end. The Lord will raise against them a nation that shall afflict the whole country “from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness.”

(AMOS VII., VIII. 1-3.)

In a series of three successive visions the prophet sees the steady approach of judgment against Israel. The ruin threatened in the first and second is averted by his intercession. But in the third he sees the Lord standing with a plumb-line in His hand, and hears Him declare that He will not pass by His people any more, but will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword; and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. Then Amaziah expels Amos from Bethel. Thereupon the prophet turns his denunciation upon the faithless priest, and predicts the doom of him and his family. Then follows a fourth vision, in which the Lord announces that the end is come upon His people Israel. Once more He declares that He will not again pass by them any more.

¹ Verse 26 is translated in the future by some scholars, and connected with verse 27:—“Ye shall take up” your idols, “and I will cause you to go into captivity,” &c.

(AMOS VIII. 4-14.)

An eloquent appeal to the avaricious oppressors of the poor. This work shall not be forgotten by the God of Israel.

“ Shall not the land tremble for this,
And every one mourn that dwelleth therein? ”

When the sun is darkened in the heavens, when their feasts are turned into mourning, and their songs into lamentation, when the land is filled with mourning as for an only son, then they shall seek in vain for the Divine direction that they are now so lightly dismissing from them :—

“ Behold ! the days come, saith the Lord God,
That I will send a famine in the land,
Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the Lord :
And they shall wander from sea to sea,
And from the north even to the east,
They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord,
And shall not find it.”

(AMOS IX.)

A fifth and last vision of the judgment, followed at the end by the usual assurance of final blessing. In that day the Lord will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and raise up its ruins, and build it as in the days of old, and will bring again the captivity of Israel, and they shall build the waste places and inhabit them, and they shall be planted for ever in their own land, and Heaven shall shower all its blessings in richest abundance upon them.

Obadiah.

This short book, which occupies only one chapter in the English version, is entitled “ *The Vision of Obadiah.* ” It is a prophecy against Edom. Of Obadiah himself we know nothing. The prophecy runs as follows :—

The ruin of Edom is determined upon in the counsels of the Almighty, and the nations have been summoned against her. She has been deceived by her confidence in her mountain defences. If it were only a thief robbing by night, he would have ceased to plunder when he had enough. If the grape-gatherers came, they would have left some grapes. But Edom is utterly destroyed, utterly robbed and ransacked. Her own allies have treacherously turned against her, and driven her to the wall. And a day of fuller judgment is coming, when the boasted wisdom of Edom shall fail in her mountains. For when strangers carried her brother Jacob into captivity, "and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem," Edom was one of them, and "stood in the crossway" to bar the escape of the fugitives, and marched into the conquered city, triumphing in her destruction. Aye! the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen. As Edom has done, it shall be done to her; and her work shall return upon her own head. But upon Mount Zion shall be freedom and holiness, and the kingdom of the Lord shall be established. The house of Jacob shall be a fire to burn up its enemies, they shall extend their borders as of old, they shall possess "the Mount of Esau," and the plain of the Philistines, and the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Gilead, and the country of the Canaanites to the city of Zarephath, and the cities of the south.

Date and Composition of the Book of Obadiah.

"The day" of Jerusalem to which this book refers¹ can hardly be any other than the day of its destruction by the Chaldaeans, which is spoken of elsewhere in language which bears a striking resemblance to that used about it in the Book of Obadiah.² If this be so, the date of the Book of Obadiah is probably to be placed soon after that great catastrophe. Some writers, however, who maintain the strict chronological accuracy of the order of the Minor

¹ Obad. 11–11.

² Comp. Ps. cxlvii., Lam. iv., Ezek. xxv. 12–14, xxxv., with Obad. 10–14.

Prophets, and consequently date Obadiah long before the Babylonian Captivity, look for some earlier day of Jerusalem to which its language may have referred. Such an event they find in a capture and plunder of the city by the combined forces of the Philistines and Arabians in the reign of King Jehoram, which is recorded in the Book of Chronicles.¹ A third opinion is advocated by Bishop Wordsworth in his Commentary on the Old Testament. He believes that the place of "Obadiah" shows it to have been composed long before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaean; but he thinks that "the day" about which question has arisen is the day of that destruction. He therefore thinks that the passage referring to the conduct of the Edomites on that occasion is predictive, and should be translated in the future. These three opinions afford a fair illustration of the kind of controversy which goes on about many parts of the prophetical writings, and of the uncertainty which may exist as to the translation from the Hebrew of the tenses of verbs.

The writer of Jeremiah xlix. 7-22, would seem to have had the prophecy of Obadiah before him,² unless we are to suppose that both drew from some earlier source. There were, no doubt, many literary pieces current among the Jews which have not come down to us. However it came about, it is evident from this and other coincidences that not only many of the ideas upon subjects like this, but also much of the language in which they were expressed, were common property with the prophetical writers.

¹ 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17. Comp. verses 8-10.

² Compare verses 7, 9, 10, 14-16, with Obad. 1-8.

Jonah.

Unlike the great part of the other prophetical writings, the Book of Jonah is not the writing of a prophet but a writing about a prophet. It is more like the earlier chapters of the Book of Daniel than anything else in these books. The story is as follows :—

Shrinking from the duty imposed on him by the word of the Lord to go to Nineveh and prophesy against it for its wickedness, Jonah goes down to Joppa, a seaport on the Mediterranean coast, the modern Jaffa, and takes ship for Tarshish, hoping to escape “from the presence of the Lord.” But a terrible storm arises, and threatens the destruction of the ship. When their prayers avail nothing to calm the storm, the sailors cast lots to find the guilty one, on whose account this evil has befallen them. The lot falls on Jonah. He confesses that he is a Hebrew fleeing from the presence of his God, the God “which hath made the sea and the dry land”; and he demands of his own accord that he be cast into the sea. The sailors at first hesitate to do so terrible a deed; but in their despair they at length throw him overboard, and the sea becomes calm. Jonah is swallowed by a great fish, which after three days vomits him out in safety upon the shore. Receiving a second command to go to Nineveh, he goes at once. The people of Nineveh repent at his preaching, a great fast is proclaimed throughout the city, and the anger of the Lord is averted. Then Jonah sins again. He is “displeased” and “very angry” at the repentance of the Ninevites, and has to be reproved again by the Almighty. A gourd which grew up in a night to shelter him from the heat, as he sat before the city to see what the end would be, is eaten by a worm, and withers away as rapidly as it had grown. The sultry east wind blows upon the prophet, the fierce glare of the sun beats down upon his unprotected head. Fainting with the heat, he prays, in angry despair, that his life may be taken from him. Then the Lord reminds him of his previous indignation at the sparing of Nineveh :—“Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made it to grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand per-

sons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

In the Book of Kings a "Jonah the son of Amitai," no doubt the same about whom this book is written, is said to have foretold the victories by which Jeroboam II. recovered the Israelitish territory to the north and east.¹

The Tarshish to which Jonah attempted to flee was probably Tartessus, the Phœnician settlement on the coast of Spain. Josephus makes it Tarsus in Cilicia. He also says that Jonah was carried into the Euxine Sea, and thrown ashore there, and that he made his way overland from the coast of the Euxine to Nineveh.

The prayer of Jonah in this book is mainly a compilation of fragments of the Psalms.

The thousands in Nineveh, who could not discern their right hand from their left, are probably the children. The references to the size and population of this great city may be compared with the statement of Diodorus, who makes the circuit of the city 480 stadia, over fifty-five miles. This may not be an exaggeration if we suppose the city to have been built very open.

The Book of Jonah contained a much-needed moral for the Jews. The story of God's mercy to the repentant Ninevites was a rebuke to their pride and exclusiveness. Keil well remarks that Jonah's anger at the sparing of Nineveh "reflected the feelings and general state of mind of the Israelite nation towards the Gentiles."²

Micah.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD THAT CAME TO MICAH THE MORASTHITE IN THE DAYS OF JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH, KINGS OF JUDAH, WHICH HE SAW CONCERNING SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM."

When the priests and the prophets in Jerusalem demanded that Jeremiah should be executed for predicting the destruction of the temple, his friends appealed to the example of Micah the Morasthite, who was not put to death,

¹ 2 Kings xiv. 25.

² *Com. on the Minor Prophets*, vol. i., p. 381, Eng. trans.

though "he prophesied in the days of Hezekiah," saying, "Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest."¹ The passage thus quoted as having been spoken in the reign of Hezekiah occurs in the present book.² We cannot, however, divide the Book of Micah into distinct prophecies to be assigned to the several reigns mentioned in the title, though it seems to have been made up of a number of separate compositions, put rather loosely together. It also appears to contain some later insertions. Perhaps all that we are to understand from the title is that this book represents the teaching of a prophet who ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

The friends of Jeremiah addled that Micah's prediction did not come to pass, because of the king's repentance.

Moreshieth-Gath, which is mentioned in the first chapter, was probably the place from which Micah derived his title of "the Morasthite."

Analysis of the Book of Micah.

(Mic. 1.)

Hear, all ye people! Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is! The Lord is coming forth out of His place to judge the house of Jacob. Samaria shall be made "as an heap of the field," and her stones poured down into the valley.³ Her graven images shall be broken in pieces. The evil is coming against Judah too. It has reached the gate of Jerusalem, and is making its way through her towns.

The point of the passage in which the names of so many towns are mentioned depends on a play upon words which is not apparent in

¹ Jer. xxvi.

² Micah iii. 12.

³ See p. 70.

the English translation. Every proper name in the list is treated in this way. The effect in the original would be something like—

Tell it not in Teltown,
Hold back your tears by the enemy's hold ;
But in the homes of Ashford weep in dust and ashes ;
Pass away, O people of Fairtown, captives no longer fair, &c.

There is a difficulty in recognizing many of the names mentioned, which may be explained by the supposition that in some instances they have been altered to correspond with the new meaning imposed upon them.

(Mic. ii.)

Woe to them that have brought this upon themselves by their covetousness and oppression, who ask their prophets to prophesy smooth things, while they rob the peaceful traveller, and drive the widow and the orphan from their homes. For this they must go into captivity : they cannot rest in the land that they have polluted. Still a remnant of Israel shall yet be restored.

(Mic. iii.)

Judgment on the unworthy princes, who cruelly oppress God's people, and upon the mercenary and rapacious prophets. The princes judge for reward, the priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money. Therefore Jerusalem, like Samaria, shall be a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the Lord's House like a mound in the forest.

(Mic. iv.)

Prediction of the Messianic time. The day shall come when the mountain of the Lord's House shall be exalted above all hills, for a peaceful rule shall be established at Jerusalem, and shall extend to distant nations. In that day the wounds of Israel shall be healed, and the old dominion of Judah shall be restored ; though a time of sorrow and captivity must precede it. God's people, though threatened by many enemies, shall trample the nations under their feet, and consecrate their possessions to the Lord.

(Mic. v.)

The troops of the insulting invader may gather. But from Bethlehem, the ancient home of the House of David, small and unimportant though it be, the destined Ruler of Israel shall arise. The Lord will give His people into the hand of the enemies, until the appointed time of deliverance. Then the restoration shall take place. The new ruler shall be the shepherd of Israel ; he will govern in the strength and majesty of the name of the Lord. His kingdom shall extend to the ends of the earth. Through him Assyria shall be put down ; and the remnant of Jacob shall stand irresistible amongst the nations, blessed of the Lord and purified.

(Mic. vi., vii.)

The last section is in the form of a “controversy” between the Lord and His people. Though different parts of the composition are evidently supposed to come from different speakers, it is hard to determine with certainty in all cases where the divisions between the speeches should be made, and who the speakers are. The following distribution of the parts will give an intelligible sense, though it may not be in all particulars what the writer intended :—

The prophet announces the controversy. (vi. 1-2.)

Jehovah pleads with His people. (vi. 3-5.)

The people, through one of their number who acts as spokesman, ask what they are to do. Will the Lord be satisfied with sacrifices ? (vi. 6-7.)

The prophet answers that sacrifice is not what the Almighty requires, “but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” (vi. 8.)

The terrible contrast between this requirement of the Almighty and the actual state of society is pointed out. (vi. 9-16.)

Lamentations over the condition of the people. Perhaps there are three different speakers, according to the paragraphs in the English Bible. (vii. 1-6.)

The people express confidence in God, and submission to His will. (vii. 7-10.)

The Lord answers with a promise of blessing in due time. (vii. 11-13.)

The prophet prays for blessing upon Israel. (vii. 14.)

The Lord answers again, promising marvellous things, as in the days of the coming out of Egypt. (vii. 15.)

Concluding strains of triumph and praise, the first perhaps from the prophet (vv. 16-17), the second in chorus from the whole congregation (vv. 18-20).

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

(CONTINUED.)

Nahum.

"THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH. THE BOOK OF THE VISION OF NAHUM THE ELKOSHITE."

OF the personal history of Nahum we know nothing, nor do we know whence his title "the Elkoshite" was derived. There is a village on the Tigris named Alkosh, where his tomb is shown. "It is a place," Mr. Layard says, "held in great reverence by Mahomedans and Christians, but especially by Jews, who keep the building in repair, and flock to it in great numbers at certain seasons of the year."¹ But the tomb of Nahum at Alkosh has no more claim to be considered genuine than the tomb of Jonah, which is shown upon what was formerly supposed to be the site of Nineveh. Still Ewald thinks that Alkosh was really the home of Nahum, and that he was "a descendant of the Israelites that had at one time been carried into Assyria," and saw "with his own eyes" the approach of the danger to Nineveh about which he writes. On the other hand, we know of no mention of this village of Alkosh on the Tigris before the sixteenth century, and the early Christians looked for the birth-place of Nahum in the Holy Land. Jerome, who

¹ Layard's *Moschus*, p. 171.

wrote about the end of the fourth century of the Christian era, was shown a village called Helcesæi in Galilee, which he supposed to be Elkosh.

The date of the prophet is also uncertain. It was after the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had suffered from Assyrian invasions. If we knew the date of the destruction of Thebes in Egypt, which is apparently referred to as of recent occurrence, it might help us. But we do not. Ewald is of opinion that, at the time when the prophecy was written, "a hostile march upon Nineveh was in active progress, that the border fortresses were already falling, and that the kingdom appeared to be abandoned of its leaders and lost beyond recovery."¹

Analysis of the Prophecy of Nahum.

(NAHUM I.)

The Lord is a jealous God. He is slow to anger ; He is a tower of strength to those that trust in Him ; but to His enemies He is a consuming fire. When His wrath is kindled nothing can stand before Him. If He strikes, He will not strike twice (?) Out of Nineveh came one (Sennacherib) who afflicted Israel. But God's people need fear Nineveh no more. Her doom is decreed. Her end is near. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings the good tidings—tidings of peace for Judah—tidings that should stimulate her to renewed zeal in the service of her God.

(NAHUM II.)

The enemy has appeared before the walls of Nineveh. Now shall the wasting of Judah be avenged. The approaches to the city are gleaming with the advancing host. Within the city is hurry and confusion. The rattling chariots throng the streets. The defenders rush to the ramparts. But the river gates are opened,² and the

¹ See ch. iii. 12, 13, 18, 19.

² The meaning may be that the sluices of the canal are opened to flood the country.

enemy pours in. The terrified occupants of the palace take to flight. Hussab the Queen (?) surrounded by her weeping attendants is led into captivity. In vain the Ninevites call upon each other to stand; none looks back. The city is abandoned by the fugitives, and plundered. The lion's den is empty. Nineveh shall send no more ambassadors.

(NAHUM III.)

Woe to the guilty city! Now shall she pay the penalty of her sins. The storm of battle is driving full upon her. Nineveh shall be laid waste. Her desolation will pass into a proverb. How can she expect to escape when populous No (Egyptian Thebes) was captured, though it was defended by Egypt and Ethiopia, backed by their African allies. The strongholds of Nineveh are like ripe fruit, which falls at the touch of the eater. Her warriors are but women. The passes are left undefended, and the land is wasted with fire and sword. Nineveh's merchants shall disappear, and her battalions flee away, like the locusts in the morning sun.

The princes of Assyria sleep in the dust,¹ and the people are scattered upon the mountains. There is no healing of her wound. All that hear of it shall clap their hands, for who has not suffered from her tyranny?

Habakkuk.

"THE BURDEN WHICH HABAKKUK THE PROPHET DID SEE."

Of the personal history of Habakkuk we know nothing. There are conjectures in plenty as to the time and place at which he lived. All that we can say for certain is that the prophecy belongs to the Chaldaean period.

Analysis of the Book of Habakkuk.

(HAB. I. 2-4.)

The prophet complains of the violence and lawlessness of his time.

(HAB. I. 5-11.)

The Almighty replies that He is bringing the Chaldaeans to punish the nations.

¹ Or perhaps simply "sleep."

(HAB. I. 12-17.)

The prophet expresses his confident hope that the Almighty will not allow the impious oppressor entirely to destroy, to take His people like fish of the sea, that have no ruler—no one to defend them against their enemies.

(HAB. II.)

He takes his stand to hear what the Lord will answer.

The answer is that the proud oppressor shall not be justified, but that the just shall live by his faith. Judgment is then pronounced upon the Chaldaean for his rapacity and covetousness, for building his house by wrong, for the national sin of intemperance and his ill-treatment of the conquered, and finally for idolatry. The chapter concludes with an assertion of the sovereign majesty of the Lord, in contrast with the dumb idols of the Chaldaeans :—

“The Lord is in His holy temple ;
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

(HAB. III.)

The next chapter is “*A Prayer of Habakkuk the prophet*,” which forms a fitting conclusion to the whole propheey. The prophet, awe-stricken at the announcement of the coming judgment, supplicates the Lord to “revive” his “work in the midst of the years”—not to leave his people without support during their long trial (?). This prayer is answered by a psalm, the subject of which is God’s coming of old to deliver Israel from Egypt through the waters of the sea. The prophet finally expresses his resolution to wait on the Lord in patience and faith, though he knows that the days of trouble shall be many :—

“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines ;
The produce of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat ;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls :
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength,
And He makes my feet like hind’s feet,
And He makes me to walk upon mine high places.”

There are musical notes attached to this "Prayer of Habakkuk" like those that are to be found in the Psalter, probably showing that it was used in the public service of the Temple.

Zephaniah.

"THE WORD OF THE LORD WHICH CAME UNTO ZEPHANIAH THE SON OF CUSHI, THE SON OF GEDALIAH, THE SON OF AMARIAH, THE SON OF HIZKIAH (HEZEKIAH), IN THE DAYS OF JOSIAH THE SON OF AMON, KING OF JUDAH."

Analysis.

(ZEPH. I., II.)

For the idolatries practised in Jerusalem, for the misconduct of the princes and the violence and exactions of their subordinates, and for the money-seeking of the traders, a terrible day of wrath is coming, when the idolatrous priests shall be cut off, and the princes and their followers visited ; and the wealth of Jerusalem shall be spoiled, and her homes made desolate. The great day is near, very near, hastening on, a dark and terrible day, "a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high towers," a day when blood shall be "poured out as dust," and bodies trampled under foot like dung. The storm will sweep over the Philistine coast ; their cities shall be forsaken ; the remnant of the Jews will take possession of them, when the danger is over. Moab also and Ammon shall be punished for their bitterness ; they shall be as Sodom and Gomorrah, overgrown with nettles, a perpetual desolation. The Ethiopians also shall be slain with the sword ; and Assyria shall be destroyed. Nineveh, the proud, rejoicing city, that dwelt carelessly, shall be a desolate heap of ruins ; wild beasts shall make their dens there, and the pelican and the bittern shall roost upon the fragments of her palaces.

(ZEPH. III.)

Woe to Jerusalem, the rebellious, sin-stained city ! From her better things might have been expected ; but her princes, her prophets, and her priests have joined to increase her condemnation. She has not been taught by the devastation of foreign countries. Therefore a general day of judgment for all nations must come. After that all lands will serve the Lord, and the humbled remnant in Zion shall

be purified. Then may the daughter of Zion sing and rejoice ; the Lord shall be King in the midst of her ; she shall not see evil any more, but she shall be a name and a praise among all the nations of the earth.

Zephaniah's protest against the idolatry in Jerusalem reminds us of the reformation which was effected in the reign of Josiah.

Wars and Rumours of Wars ; the Scythians in Asia.

As we do not know exactly the time at which the prophecy of Zephaniah was composed, it would be rash to venture on any definite assertions as to the public events which may have given rise to his anticipations of such universal calamities. We know, however, generally, that during the thirty-one years of Josiah's reign the most momentous changes were taking place in Asia, and that the dwellers at Jerusalem must often have heard tidings which deeply concerned themselves as well as the surrounding nations, of the march of hostile armies and of the siege and sack of cities.¹ The end of the Assyrian empire, which had long been supreme in Asia, was drawing near, and many nations—the Medes, the Chaldaeans, the Egyptians—were watching for a share of the prey. Nineveh was frequently threatened. Herodotus records two unsuccessful sieges of the vast city by the Medes, as well as that in which it was finally taken. The second of these sieges was raised by the arrival of the Scythians on the scene. Herodotus says that these wild hordes from “the north” overran “the whole of Asia,” plundering in all directions and overturning everything, and were not finally expelled until they had held possession for twenty-eight years. On their march to Egypt they must have passed close to the borders of the Jews, and on their return they

¹ Herod. i. 102–106.

fell foul of the Philistine city of Askelon. The Philistine cities were especially exposed to danger from the passing and repassing of hostile armies in the great struggle between Egypt on the one hand and the Asiatic powers on the other, for the main road from central Asia to Egypt which ran along the level coast of the Mediterranean lay through their country. Up amongst the mountains of Judah Jerusalem was comparatively out of the way, and “the daughter of Zion” may often have “laughed”¹ in security, while the armies from the north or the south were marching through the plain of Esdraelon, or along the Mediterranean shore. Josiah abandoned this advantage when he went down to meet Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo.

Haggai.

Haggai and Zechariah are the two prophets whose names have been already mentioned together in the Book of Ezra as encouraging Zerubbabel and Joshua to recommence the restoration of the Temple, after it had been stopped for some time by the opposition of the adversaries, and as assisting them in prosecuting the work. The book which bears the name of Haggai relates more fully the part which he took at that time, and consists mainly of four addresses, said to have been delivered by him, and dated in the second year of Darius, the year in which the rebuilding was resumed. These addresses are so short that they are probably intended to be regarded merely as summaries and not full reports. Unlike the other prophecies, they are in simple prose, exhibiting, however, an occasional tendency to assume the poetical form.

¹ 2 Kings xix. 21.

Analysis of the Book of Haggai.

(HAG. I. 1-11.)

After calling the attention of Zerubbabel and Joshua to the delay in resuming the rebuilding of the Temple, the prophet reproaches the people with their dilatoriness and want of zeal. They have found time to build luxurious dwellings for themselves, but they say that the time has not yet come to raise the House of God from its ruins. This is the reason, he tells them, that the labours of their hands have not yielded them satisfaction, and the earth has withheld its fruits.

(HAG. I. 12-15.)

The first appeal having met with a favourable response, the prophet encourages the two leaders and the people with the assurance that the Lord is with them. The work is then actually commenced.

(HAG. II. 1-9.)

In less than a month, however, it would appear that their zeal has flagged again. They are apparently discouraged at the poorness of the result of their labours. There are some amongst them who remember the former glory of the Temple, and, in comparison, the building that they are now raising is as nothing.¹ But the prophet bids them not to be discouraged. The Temple may be small and mean in appearance at the beginning, the builders may be few and despised, but, in accordance with the ancient covenant, the Spirit of God is amongst them as of old. Soon there shall be a great awakening, and all nations shall be roused, and they will bring their desirable things to that House,² and it shall be filled with glory. The silver and the gold are the Lord's, and He will make the later glory greater than the former, and in this house will He give peace.

(HAG. II. 10-19.)

In a third address the people are assured that, though their neglect of the Temple hitherto has been sufficient to bring a blight upon all their labours, yet from that day forward the Lord will bless them with plenty.

¹ Compare Ezra iii. 12.

² Hag. ii. 7. Instead of "the desire of all nations," many scholars translate, with the LXX., "the desirable things of all nations." Compare Is. lx. 5-13.

(HAG. II. 20-23.)

Finally the prophet addresses Zerubbabel individually, telling him that all thrones shall be overturned, and all the kingdoms of the earth destroyed, but that the Lord has chosen him, and will preserve him for high honour. As Zerubbabel was the representative at that time of the house of David, we are probably to understand this promise as made, not only to himself individually, but to the house which he represented, and from which the Messiah was to come, as the promises made to David were made to himself "and to his seed for ever."

Zechariah.

The book which bears the name of Zechariah divides itself into three parts.

FIRST PART.

(ZECH. I.-VIII.)

The first part is in style and manner like the preceding book, and is fixed to the same period by the dates which are given. It begins with a general exhortation to the people to learn from the past, and to be wiser than their fathers, upon whom God's judgments came. This exhortation is dated in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. It is followed by a series of visions, the first of which is dated on the four-and-twentieth day of the eleventh month of the same year.

(ZECH. I. 7-17.)

First Vision. An apparition of horsemen. They are the Lord's messengers who have been to and fro through the earth, and bring back tidings that the nations are still and at rest. The question is therefore asked, evidently in reference to the promised awakening of the nations, When will the Lord have mercy upon Jerusalem, and upon the cities of Judah? The Lord answers that the Temple shall be built, and the cities of Judah shall overflow with prosperity.

(ZECH. I. 18-21.)

Second Vision. Four horns. They are the powers of the earth that "have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." They are broken to pieces by four workmen.

(ZECH. II.)

Third Vision. A man with a measuring-line in his hand, “to measure Jerusalem.” But the extent of Jerusalem shall be without measure. She shall be too wide for walls, and the Lord “will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” Her children shall return from their banishment, her God will dwell in the midst of her, and many nations shall join themselves to the Lord, and be His people.

(ZECH. III.)

Fourth Vision. The prophet sees Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and the accuser standing beside him. The Lord rebukes the accuser. The filthy garments—the sign of an accused person—with which Joshua is clad, are taken off him, and he is clad in festal robes, in token of acquittal. He is assured that he need not fear; if he walks in God’s ways, and keeps His charge, he shall retain his place in God’s house. Furthermore, Joshua and his fellows are men of portent (that is, they are signs or types of others to whom they direct our thoughts. Comp. same word in Is. viii. 18). The Lord will bring forth His servant *Tzemach* (the springing shoot). The eyes of the Lord are upon the stone laid before Joshua (the foundation-stone of the Temple); He will perfect it, and the land will be the home of purity and peace.

The first part of this vision may have reference to some charge laid against Joshua at the Persian court by an adversary. The immediate reference in the mention of God’s servant *Tzemach* may have been to Zerubbabel, who was at that time the actual representative of the royal house of David, and under whose rule the building of the Temple was to be completed.¹ Such a reference to Zerubbabel need not imply that the fulfilment of the hope was exhausted in him. (See the note on ch. vi. 9–15.)

(ZECH. IV.)

Fifth Vision. A golden candelabrum, with seven pipes leading from the oil-bowl to the seven lamps. By the candelabrum are two olive trees. The oil feeding the lights represents Divine Grace, and the object of the vision is shown by the message conveyed to Zerubbabel, “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith

¹ See Zech. iv. ; vi. 9–15 : 1 Chron. iii. 19 : Jer. xxiii. 5.

the Lord of Hosts." Before Zerubbabel mountains shall vanish and become plains. Through the grace of God he shall place the last stone upon the Temple. As his hands have laid the foundation, "his hands shall also finish it." The two olive trees are "the two anointed ones," no doubt Zerubbabel and Joshua.

(ZECH. v. 1-4.)

Sixth Vision. A huge roll flying over the land. It is the sentence of Divine condemnation upon the wickedness, the thieving, and false swearing in Judah.

(ZECH. v. 5-11.)

Seventh Vision. An Ephah, or vessel. The lid of the Ephah being raised, the prophet sees wickedness in the form of a woman sitting within. The heavy lid is closed down upon her, and she is carried away out of the land, and east into the land of Shinar.

The meaning is, no doubt, the purification of the holy land from evil. Shinar, or Babylonia, is selected as the final abode of wickedness, apparently in consequence of the many hateful memories connected with that land.

(ZECH. vi. 1-8.)

Eighth Vision. Chariots and horses coming out from between two brazen mountains (perhaps the mountains of Jerusalem), and from the presence of God, and going to the north, and to the south, and to and fro through the earth. Some special importance is attached to the mission of those which go into the north country, though the exact meaning of the passage is not quite clear, as is the case with some other parts of these visions.

This last vision is apparently the climax of the whole, and probably represents the completion of the work, the progress of which has been traced through the preceding seven, viz.: the establishment of the Divine rule in the purified Jerusalem where the Temple of God stands, and its extension over all the earth.

(ZECH. vi. 9-15.)

The prophet is next directed to take gold and silver, which had been brought from Babylon as a donation to the Temple (?), and to make crowns, and to set them upon the head of Joshua, and proclaim that "the man whose name is *Tzemach*" shall build the Temple of

the Lord, and shall sit upon the throne, which is to be the centre of spiritual and temporal blessing.

This passage, as well as the other in which the name Tzemach is mentioned, is perplexing. The name of Zerubbabel is not actually mentioned in either. The majority of commentators therefore suppose that the reference is to a future greater representative of the line of David. Some boldly propose to insert Zerubbabel's name along with Joshua's in chapter vi. 11, a proposition which may derive some support from the fact that the word "crowns" is in the plural. But such a short and easy method of making a passage say what the commentator thinks that it ought to say is not satisfactory.

(ZECH. VII.)

In the fourth year of Darius, in answer to the question whether the fasts which had been kept during the Captivity were to be continued now that the people were restored to their own land, and that the Temple was being rebuilt, Zechariah answers in a strain which reminds us of the older prophets, to whose teaching he appeals. What the Lord requires now, as then, is that those who call upon His name should "execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother, and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor," and that none should "imagine evil against his brother." It was for the neglect of these duties that God had scattered them among the nations.

(ZECH. VIII.)

Once again the word of the Lord comes with the assurance of complete forgiveness and full recompense to Jerusalem for all that she has suffered. Amongst the many promises of blessing is one, having an evident reference to the sparseness as yet of the population of the city, that the old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, "and every man with his staff in his hand for very age; and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." And because of the manifold blessings of that time, and because of the mercy and goodness of God, who turns their fasts into "joy and gladness and cheerful feasts," therefore their hands ought to be strong to do the Lord's work, and therefore they ought to love goodness and truth, and hate evil.

SECOND PART.

(ZECH. IX.-XI.)

The next division of the book, both in form and matter, completely recalls the style of the prophets of the regal period. The following is an outline of its contents:—A heavy visitation comes upon Syria and Damascus, and upon the Phœnician and Philistine cities of the Mediterranean coast. But Jerusalem need not fear. The Lord will encamp about His house, and no oppressor shall pass through Zion any more. But there, secure from war's alarms, a peaceful king shall reign. His beneficent rule will include Ephraim and Judah, and will extend to the ends of the earth. There is hope for the prisoners too; they shall return home, and united Israel shall stand against the world; Judah shall be the bow in the hands of the Lord, and Ephraim the arrow, and Zion shall be His sword. Their power shall be irresistible, and the blessing of Heaven will be upon them. Idolatry and false shepherds have been snares; therefore the flock is scattered. But Judah is the Lord's battle-horse; He will strengthen Judah and save Ephraim, and the rejected ones shall be restored. Ephraim may be scattered among the nations, but they shall be brought again from Egypt and from Assyria, and planted in Gilead and Lebanon, till there be no room for them. The pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.

Chapter XI. dwells more fully on the false shepherds, who have been only casually mentioned in the chapter before. When the alarm comes from Lebanon and Bashan, the prophet is directed to take charge of the flock, which has been destroyed by its own leaders. He takes two staves, *Graciousness* and *Union*, and tends the suffering flock. Three of the evil shepherds are cut off in one month. But the demoralized people will not understand or accept his guidance. Reluctantly, step by step, he resigns his charge. First, by breaking the staff Graciousness, he intimates that the foolish people are destroying the gracious covenant of the Almighty. This has no effect. He next tries to elicit some appreciation of his services by asking for his hire. They gravely give him the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver. It is useless to contend any more. He casts the money into the Temple treasury,¹ and breaks the remaining staff, the emblem of

¹ Probably the correct translation in verse 13, instead of "the potter."

"brotherhood between Judah and Israel." The sheep must be left to the evil shepherds, whom they have chosen, and whose tender mercies are cruel. Nevertheless, a judgment shall fall upon the shepherds.

THIRD PART.

(*Zech. xii.-xiv.*.)

In the day of the siege, when Jerusalem is compassed about by all nations, the Lord will smite her enemies with confusion, and defend her inhabitants. Along with the temporal deliverance will come a spiritual awakening; the Lord "will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications," and they shall mourn for the past. A fountain shall be opened for sin and for uncleanness. Idolatry and false prophecy and the spirit of uncleanness shall pass out of the land. Their own parents will be first to lay hands upon the false prophets, who shall be exposed in their true characters; they will throw aside the prophet's garb, and disown their late occupation.—Awake, O sword, against the unworthy shepherds! for a day of trial is at hand, a day of sifting and purification for God's people.—Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, when all nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and plundered, and half of the inhabitants carried into captivity. Then shall the Lord come forth to battle against the nations. At His appearance the earth shall cleave asunder. Even His own people shall flee in terror at the sight, as they fled from the earthquake in the reign of King Uzziah. But it will be the dawning of the eternal day—day that shall never give place to night. A perennial fountain of life shall stream from Jerusalem to the east and to the west.¹ In that day the Lord alone shall be King. All the land from the north to the south shall become a plain; Jerusalem shall stand on high in the midst of it;² she shall dwell safely, and no accursed thing shall be found within her walls. The nations that fought against her shall be smitten with plagues and confusion. Then all who are left of them shall come up year by year to the holy city "to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts."

¹ Comp. *Ezek. xlviij.*, and *Joel iii. 18-21*.

² Comp. *Is. ii. 2*.

Authorship of "Zechariah."

An unusually large number of critics are agreed that Zechariah ix.-xi. and xii.-xiv. are not the productions of the writer of the earlier part of the book. There is much in chapters ix.-xi. to fall in with the supposition that this portion belongs to the time when the kingdom of the ten tribes was being destroyed by the Assyrians. The mention by name of the Assyrian oppressor, the mention of Egypt along with Assyria, the coming of the storm from Lebanon and the north, the list of foreign nations suffering at the same time, the scattering of Ephraim, Gilead and Lebanon being named as the districts to which the exiles are to return, while Judah is promised exemption from conquest, and is apparently the centre of hope for the whole race in the great calamity—all this would suit the times of the Assyrian conquest very well.¹ But it is not hard to find an application for at least some of it to the times of Joshua the son of Jozadak and Zerubbabel, so that, if it be an older fragment, it was not without consideration that it was attached to the Book of Zechariah. Chapters xii.-xiv. look like the utterance of a prophet in the last days of the Old Jerusalem, when its destruction by the Chaldaeans was at hand. But the announcement of the terrors of the judgment to come, the promise of plenteous mercy to the humble and contrite heart, the asser-

¹ Those who assign an early date to this portion of the book naturally look among the kings of Israel for the three shepherds which were cut off in one month (ch. xi. 8). Ewald finds that in 2 Kings xv. 10, instead of the Hebrew words translated "before the people," the LXX. has the name of a person (Keblaam), who joined with Shallum in his conspiracy against Zechariah. He thinks that Zechariah, Shallum, and Keblaam were the three shepherds.

tion of the final purification of the Church, and of the certain dawning of the eternal day, which are to be found in these chapters—these are subjects suitable to all times, and not least to that particular time when the Jewish Temple, upon which one judgment had already fallen so heavily, was rising again from its ruins in the hope of a better future.

Malachi.

"THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD TO ISRAEL BY MALACHI."

Of the personal history of the last of the prophets nothing is known. It is not even certain that we are right in giving him the name of Malachi. The word which is so translated in the title of the prophecy is the same that is rendered "messenger" in another part of the book;¹ and in the Septuagint translation the title of the book actually runs—"the sum of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of His messenger." It is possible that this interpretation may be the correct one. Thus, the words of the last of the Old Testament prophets, like the words of so many more of those whose remains we have been considering, come to us, as the first of the prophets of the New Testament wished his words to come, merely as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

We are not even sure of the exact date to which the book belongs. It has been conjectured that the writer of it flourished at the time of Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem, and that he perhaps assisted Nehemiah in his work of reform, as Haggai and Zechariah had assisted at the rebuilding of the Temple, and other prophets at previous reformations. The internal indications would agree

¹ Mal. iii. 1.

very well with this date : there is no mention of the Captivity, which looks as if the memory of that great chastisement was not so fresh as in the early years of the return ; the Temple is built and the priests already growing careless in the service of it ; the sins of which the prophet complains so bitterly are the same as those which called for the interference of Nehemiah—neglect of their duties by the priesthood, marriages with foreign women, and oppression of the poor by the rich.

Analysis of the Book of Malachi.

The prophet begins by reminding the Jews of the privileges which have been conferred upon their race. Of old Israel was preferred to Esau. The mountains of Edom, the heritage of the descendants of Esau, are now laid waste, while the Jews dwell in their own land under the protection of the Almighty. But in spite of all this, Israel does not give to her God the honour that is His due. The priests treat His service with contempt ; they offer upon His altar imperfect victims—the blind, the lame, the sick—such as they would not dare to offer to their national governor. The prophet, therefore, sternly warns them not to presume upon the privilege of the chosen race. In every nation, from the rising to the setting sun, the Almighty has those who worship Him, and offer Him pure and acceptable sacrifice. He threatens the priests with a curse, if they do not improve ; and contrasts their present conduct with the example set by their righteous forefathers of the tribe of Levi. He next condemns the Jews who have married heathen women, putting away their own Jewish wives for the purpose, and so “covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out” from the ill-treated ones. In vain they allege the example of the conduct of Abraham towards Hagar. There was a special reason in his case, namely, that he was seeking to preserve free from contamination the seed to which the promises were made.¹ But, behold ! the Lord will come to His

¹ This is perhaps the meaning of ch. ii. 15, which may be rendered :—“ No one ever did this (*i.e.* put away his wife) who has had in him a remnant of the Spirit. And (if ye say) Why did the one (*i.e.* Abraham) do it ? —the answer is, Because he sought,” &c.

Temple—suddenly, and purge away the evil, and make the offering of Judah acceptable, as in the old days. After a further expostulation with the evil-doers, the book concludes with a repetition of the announcement that the Lord will visit the earth with great and terrible judgment, sending His messenger, Elijah the prophet, before His face to prepare His people for the coming of the great day.¹

Other Prophets mentioned in the Old Testament.

In addition to the prophets whose names are preserved in connexion with their writings, some others, who have left no literary remains that are now recognizable, are mentioned in the historical narrative. In the histories of David and Solomon the names of "Gad the Seer" and of "Nathan the Prophet" frequently occur. Ahijah the Shilonite, *i.e.* a native of Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim, the seat of the ancient sanctuary of Israel, instigated the revolt of the ten tribes, and continued to exercise his prophetic functions during the reign of Jeroboam I. Shemaiah and "Iddo the Seer" belonged to the same period, ministering to the kingdom of Judah. Shemaiah prophesied under Rehoboam, and wrote an account of his reign. The writings of Iddo were referred to as authorities for the reigns of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah. The writings of both the one and the other are now lost, but it is possible that, like some others that are mentioned in a similar way, they may form the foundation of parts of the Books of the Chronicles. Azariah and Hanani belong to the reign of Asa. The prophesying of the former against existing abuses led to Asa's reformation. The latter was put to death by the king for daring to rebuke his want of faith in making terms with the Syrian enemies. Jehu the son of Hanani, a prophet of Judah, is mentioned first as

¹ See p. 313.

denouncing the sins of Baasha king of Israel, and afterwards as condemning Jehoshaphat's alliance with the idolatrous Ahab. He, too, was historian as well as prophet, and wrote an account of Jehoshaphat's reign. Two other prophets in Jehoshaphat's time were Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, who encouraged the king and people in their war with the Moabites and a host of other enemies; and Eliezer, who condemned Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahaziah, as Jehu had condemned his alliance with Ahab. We have already mentioned the parts which Elijah and Elisha played in the northern kingdoms about this time. Micaiah the son of Imlah also appears in the northern kingdom in the reign of Ahab, and is not unworthy of a place beside the great Elijah. His fearless stand against Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah and four hundred other prophets of falsehood, in that remarkable scene when the approaching fate of Ahab was announced, bears some resemblance to the scene upon Mount Carmel, when Elijah defied the prophets of Baal. In the reign of Uzziah is mentioned an earlier Zechariah, not to be confounded with his namesake of the Second Temple, though the conjecture has been hazarded that part of the book of Zechariah may have been the composition of the former prophet. In the reign of Pekah king of Israel, when there was war with Judah, and an enormous number of Jewish captives had been taken by the army of Israel, it was "a prophet of the Lord whose name was Oded" who advised the magnanimous restoration of the prisoners—a deed of brotherly kindness which illuminates with a late gleam of light the rapidly closing day of the northern kingdom. "Huldah the Prophetess" belongs to the reign of Josiah. Urijah the son of Shemaiah was put to death in the reign of Jehoiakim for prophesying the approaching

ruin of the Temple. The reference to his fate made in the story of Jeremiah's danger has already been mentioned.

Succession of the Prophets.

The whole succession of the prophets as far as it is known to us will therefore stand at something like the following. The names of those who are not known to have left any writings which have come down to us are printed in italics. At the head of the list we place the name of

SAMUEL.

Gad the Seer.

Nathan the Prophet.

Athijah the Shilonite.

(IN JUDAH.)

(IN ISRAEL.)

Iddo the Seer.

Ahijah (continued to prophesy in

Shemariah.

Israel.)

Azariah.

Hanani.

Jehu the son of Hanani.

Micahia the son of Imlah.

Eliezer.

ELIJAH.

Jahaziel.

Elisha.

JOEL (?)

AMOS (?)

Jonath (?)

Succession of the Prophets—continued.

(IN JUDAH.)

(IN ISRAEL.)

Zechariah I.

Oded.

Hosea.

Isaiah.

Micah the Morasthite.

Zephaniah (?)

Nahum (?)

Habakkuk (?)

Huldah the Prophetess.

Jeremiah.

Urijah.

Ezekiel.

Obadiah (?)

Deutero-Isaiah (?)

Haggai.

Zechariah II.

Joel (?)

Malachi.

*The Book of Jonah written (?)**The Book of Daniel written (?)*

Of course it is not to be supposed that the above list contains the names of all who held the prophetic office in Judah or Israel. There were many other prophets besides these. These are but the few whose names have been preserved from the undistinguished throng. At one time at least it would appear that the prophets of Jehovah in

Israel were to be counted by the hundred, like the prophets of Baal or other heathen deities.¹

The Days without a Prophet.

With Malachi the succession of the Prophets came to an end. He was “the last of the prophets,” and the writers of the apocryphal Jewish books, which belong to the succeeding period, touchingly speak of their own day as the time when no prophet was seen among them. But the darkness was illumined by the trust that the prophetic spirit was not dead but only sleeping, and the day was looked for, with perfect confidence, when “there should arise a faithful prophet.” This expectation was connected with the belief, existing at the time when the Book of Malachi was written, that Elijah or some other of the ancient prophets was to visit the earth again.² In the opening pages of the New Testament we shall read how this expectation was fulfilled in the spirit, if not in the letter.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 4, 19, 22; xxii. 6: 2 Kings ii. 7: Jer. xxix. 1: Hos. xii. 10, &c.

² Mal. iv. 5. Comp. Ezek. xxxvi. 24, 25. See p. 309.

SUPPLEMENTAL CHAPTER.

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.¹

The Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible.

THE order of the Books of the Old Testament as we have given them is the order of the English Bible,² which is the same as the present order of the Septuagint, from which the first English translation was descended through the Vulgate.³ In the Hebrew Bible the books are differently arranged. They are divided into three great groups, called respectively—

1. THE LAW (Torah).
2. THE PROPHETS (Nebeim).
3. THE SACRED WRITINGS (Kethubim).

The Law consists of the five Books of Moses, viz.—

1. GENESIS (Bereshith).
2. EXODUS (Shemoth).
3. LEVITICUS (Vayikra).
4. NUMBERS (Banidbar).
5. DEUTERONOMY (Debarim).

¹ *Canon* was originally a Greek word meaning a straight rod or rule. It was also used to signify a collection of books. When used of the books of the Bible it is to be understood as meaning the collection of books recognized by the Church as containing an authoritative rule of faith and practice. A book belonging to the Canon is called Canonical.

² See p. 3.

³ See pp. 4, 146 (note).

In the Prophets are included not only some of what we have called Prophetical Books, but also some of the Historical Books, which were, perhaps, placed under this heading as being the work of prophetical writers. This group is again subdivided into the Former and the Latter Prophets. The Books of the Former Prophets are—

1. JOSHUA.
2. JUDGES.
3. I. and II. SAMUEL.
4. I. and II. KINGS.

The Books of the Latter Prophets are—

1. ISAIAH.
2. JEREMIAH.
3. EZEKIEL.
4. THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS, arranged as in the English Bible.

The Kethubim, or Sacred Writings, called in Greek Hagiographa, are as follows :—

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. PSALMS. | 7. ECCLESIASTES. |
| 2. PROVERBS. | 8. ESTHER. |
| 3. JOB. | 9. DANIEL. |
| 4. SONG OF SOLOMON. | 10. EZRA. |
| 5. RUTH. | 11. NEHEMIAH. |
| 6. LAMENTATIONS. | 12. CHRONICLES. |

The Formation of the Canon.

Of the process by which this collection of books came to be put together and to occupy its present position of authority we have no distinct record. Our knowledge on the subject is vague and mainly conjectural.

The account of the finding of the Book of the Law in the Temple in the reign of Josiah, and of the proceedings in connexion with that event, shows that the Hebrews before the Captivity were familiar with the idea of a book as an authoritative guide on the subject of religion, and that some book of the law, whether an early version of the Book of Deuteronomy or some other, was then recognized as holding such a position of authority.¹ Whether any other writings were admitted to the same position of authority as the Book of the Law before the Captivity is a point upon which we have no evidence.

Many circumstances tend to confirm the tradition, which has long been current in the Jewish and Christian Churches, that the work of collecting and editing the Hebrew Sacred Books received its great impulse in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. There is first the account of the great public reading of the law which took place in their time, coupled with the description of Ezra, the leading spirit on the occasion, as “a ready scribe in the law of Moses,” who “had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”² Then there is in the Apocryphal Book of 2 Esdras a legend, which was no doubt founded upon some truth, that the law having been completely lost was recovered again by Ezra, who received a special Divine inspiration to dictate it anew to five scribes.³ The Second Book of Maccabees contains a statement quoted from some earlier writing that Nehemiah founded a library, and “gathered together the

¹ See 2 Kings xxii. 8–20; xxiii. 1–25. See pp. 89, 140. See also Ex. xxiv. 7; Deut. xxxi. 26, &c.

² Ezra vii. 6, 10. A ready scribe is here a skilful man of letters, not a quick writer.

³ 2 Esdras xiv. 19–48.

[writings] concerning the kings and prophets, and the [writings] of David, and letters of kings concerning offerings.”¹ All this clearly indicates the age of Ezra and Nehemiah as a time when some important advance was made in the formation of the Canon. The Books of the Law were probably edited by Ezra. Whether in their final form or not we cannot be certain; there is nothing to forbid the supposition that they may have received some later revision. In the account of the collection of books attributed to Nehemiah the expression “the writings concerning the kings and prophets” looks like a description of the second part of the Hebrew Canon, and it has been conjectured that the “letters of kings concerning offerings” may have been some early records relating to the time of the Return and the rebuilding of the Temple, which were afterwards used in compiling the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. If so, we must suppose that a second collection was soon added to the five Books of the Law, and that it contained most or all of what was afterwards the second division of the Hebrew Canon, together with the “letters of the kings” and a collection of Psalms. It must be admitted, however, that this passage from 2 Maccabees appears in company with some very apocryphal stories, and may not be trustworthy. But in any case we may assume that the work commenced by Ezra was continued after his time, and that “the Prophets” were soon added to “the Law.”

Some writers have endeavoured to prove that the Canon was closed before the end of the Persian period. But there is no evidence to show this. On the contrary, the statements that Antiochus Epiphanes, in his persecution of the Jews, sought out and burnt the Books of the Law, and

¹ 2 Macc. ii. 13.

that Judas Maccabæus gathered together again the books which had been lost during the war, may be accepted as proving that something yet remained to be done for the Sacred Books even in the Grecian period.¹

There is, therefore, no argument to be derived from the history of the Canon to contradict the opinions which we have mentioned elsewhere as to the later date of some of the books.² The position of the Book of Daniel, and of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, in the last division of the Canon, would be in favour of the supposition of their late composition.³ The Psalter shows signs of perhaps more than one rearrangement, and may have received very late accessions, though some former edition of it may have been used in the Temple from a very early period.

In the prologue to the Book of Ecclesiasticus, a writing of uncertain date, but probably to be placed in the latter part of the second century B.C., we meet with words which show clearly that the Canon had then reached its threefold form. The writer speaks of "the Law, and the Prophecies, and the rest of the Books."⁴ Even this does not, however, show that the list of books was then finally settled, for as late as the first Christian century there were disputes amongst the Jewish authorities as to the admission of some books, questions having been raised as to the right of Ecclesiastes, the Canticles, Esther, and Proverbs, to a place in the Canon. Josephus, who wrote near the end of that century, gave the number of the Sacred Books as

¹ 1 Macc. i. 56; 2 Macc. ii. 14; Jos. *Ant.* xii. 5, § 4.

² See pp. 154-156, 181, 272, 273.

³ The order in which these three books occur is strange, if they were originally one work. It may be that Ezra and Nehemiah were separated from Chronicles and first admitted to the Canon, to form a continuation of the Book of Kings, and that Chronicles was added after.

⁴ Comp. Luke xxiv. 41. See Acts xxviii. 23.

twenty-two, viz.—five of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, and four of “Hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.”¹ It is evident that he included in the Prophetical Books some of the later historical works, but it is not clear how he made up the numbers thirteen and four. His list, however, must have been nearly, if not exactly, the present list, and we may regard the Canon as having been practically closed about this time, though we still find some uncertainty on the subject among the early Christian writers.

Later Jewish Tradition.

Centuries later Jewish tradition has much to tell about the history of the Sacred Books. But it is impossible to separate whatever grains of truth these traditions may contain from their mountains of rubbish. One passage from the Talmud will afford an illustration:—

“But who wrote [the Books of the Bible]? Moses wrote his Book and the section of Balaam, and Job. Joshua wrote his Book and eight verses in the Law. Samuel wrote his Book and Judges and Ruth. David wrote the Psalms [of which, however, some were composed] by the ten venerable elders, Adam the first man, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Haman (Heman), Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. Jeremiah wrote his Book, Kings, and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his friends wrote [reduced to writing?] Isaiah, Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes. The men of the Great Synagogue wrote [reduced to writing?] Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther. Ezra wrote his Book and the genealogy in Chronicles down to himself. . . . Who

¹ Against Ap. i. 8.

brought the remainder of the Books [of Chronicles] to a close? Nehemiah the son of Hachalijah.”¹

The Septuagint, or Alexandrian Version; The Apocrypha.

Besides the Hebrew Bible there was also a Greek Bible which was used by the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria and elsewhere. It is generally agreed that the commencement of this version was made in the first half of the third century B.C., by the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek. The translations of the following books appear to have been the work of different persons, and were probably made at different times.

In addition to the Greek version of the Hebrew Canonical Books, the Septuagint also contains the writings which are known as the Apocrypha. These Apocryphal Books belong to a later period of Jewish literature than the Books of the Hebrew Canon. Few, if any, of them “can be thrown further back than the commencement of the third century B.C.”² Some of them are translations from Hebrew originals which have been lost, and others were apparently written from the first in Greek. They are, on the whole, much inferior in character to the Canonical Books. They are included in the Canon of the Church of Rome, but the English Church allows them a position of only secondary importance. A translation of them is contained in some English Bibles along with the Canonical Books, but it is more commonly printed by itself.

¹ Baba Bathra, f. 14, b. Quoted in Smith’s *Bib. Dict.*, Art. *Canon*, and *The Canon of the Bible* by Samuel Davidson, p. 41.

² B. F. Westcott, in Smith’s *Bib. Dict.*, Art. *Apocrypha*.

I N D E X.

- AARON, 23, 24, 26.
Abel, 7.
Abiathar, 59.
Abijah: *see* Abijam.
Abijam, 65, 83, 309.
Abimelech, 12, 14.
Abishai, 56, 58.
Abner, 55.
Abraham, Abram, 9–13, 126, 127, 128, 129, 207, 308, 319.
Absalom, 58, 156.
Acrostics (Alphabetic), 193, 200, 259.
Adam, 5, 128, 319.
Adam (Descendants of), 7, 128.
Adonijah, 58.
Adversaries of Judah and Benjamin (The), 98.
Agur, the son of Jakeh, 193.
Ahab, king of Israel, 65, 69, 310.
Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, 252.
Ahasuerus, 161, 162.
Ahaz, 66, 76, 86, 225.
Ahaziah, king of Israel, 65, 86, 310.
Ahaziah, king of Judah, 65, 76, 84.
Ahijah the Shilonite, 64, 309, 311.
Ahikam, 249, 252, 254.
Alexander the Great, 99, 155.
Amalek, Amalekites, 55, 56.
Amaziah, king of Judah, 66, 85.
Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, 280, 282.

- Ammon, Ammonites, 11, 52, 56, 60, 79, 86, 98, 128, 212, 256, 264, 281, 296.
Amon, 66, 87.
Amorites, 27, 128.
Amos, 210, 217, and note, 280, 311.
AMOS (THE Book or), 280–283.
Amoz, 217, and note.
Anakim, 45.
Anath, 46.
Anathoth, 248, 251, 252.
Antiochus Epiphanes, 272, 317.
Apoerypha, Apocryphal Books, 316, 317, 320.
Arab, Arabia, 230, 256, 285.
Arad the Canaanite, 26.
Ariel, 233.
Ark (The), 29, 51, 54, 56, 59, 149.
Arsareth, 103.
Art and Feeling, 259.
Artaxerxes, 95.
Asa, 41, 75, 83, 309.
Ashdod, 228, 236.
Asherah, 83 (note).
Ashtoreth, 60, 88.
Askelon, 298.
Assonance in Hebrew Poetry, 167 (note).
Assyria, Assyrians, 72, 76, 77, 212, 221, 223, 225, 226, 228, 232, 233, 236, 249, 265, 291, 304, 306.
Assyrian kings mentioned in the Old Testament, 153.
Athaliah, 66, 84.
Athanasius (S.), 154.
Atonement (Day of), 37.
Azariah (Uzziah), 66, 85, 92, 217, 305.
Azariah the prophet, 309, 311.

Baal, 46, 69, 70.
Baal (Prophets of), 313.
Baasha, 65, 75, 310.
Babel, 9.
Babylon, Babylonians, 77, 79, 94, 181, 182, 189, 212, 224, 228, 237, 238, 248, 251, 252, 257, 291, 295.
Balak, 27.
Balam, 27.

- Bamoth : *see* High Places.
Baptism, 13.
Baruch, 248, 253, 254, 257.
Barzillai (The aged), 199.
Bashan, 27.
Bathsheba, 59.
Beersheba, 14.
Belshazzar, 270, 271.
Benhadad, 75.
Benjamin, 17.
Bethaven, 276.
Bethel, 16, 17, 68, 88, 276, 280, 281, 282.
Bethlehem, 290.
Bible (The English), 2, 3, 180, 274, 314.
Bible (The Greek), 4, 146, 314, 320.
Bible (The Hebrew), 146, 274, 314, 320.
Bible (The), a record of progressive revelation, 142.
Bible (The), and the Young, 163 and Preface.
Bildad the Shuhite, 172.
Boaz, 48.
Book of Jasher, 109, 148.
Book of the Wars of the Lord, 109.
Book of the Law found in the Temple, 89, 138, 140, 250, 297, 316.
Burke (Edmund), 174.

- Cain, 7, 128.
Cain (Descendants of), 7, 128, 129.
Caleb, 25, 129.
Canaan, 8, 9, 128.
Canaan (Conquest of), 44, 45, 113.
Canon, Canonical, 314-320.
CANTICLES: *see* Song of Solomon.
Carchemish, 79, 255.
Carlyle (Thomas), 57, 175.
Census, 19, 28, 129.
Chaldaans: *see* Babylonians.
Charran, 9.
Chebar, 261, 262, 263.
Chemosh, 60.
Cheyne (T. K.), 237.
Chittim = Cyprus, 231.

- Chozeh*, 209.
 Christianity, Christian Writers, &c., 2, 47, 49, 131, 136, 141, 143, 204, 207.
CHRONICLES (THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF), 50, 91-93, 149, 154, 156, 157, 158, 309, 315, 318, 319, 320.
 "Chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah," 149, 160.
 Chronology, 19, 20 (note), 153.
 Chusanrishathaim, 46.
Circumcision, 11, 13.
 Cities of the plain, 10.
Clean and Unclean, 40.
Commeree, 59, 60, 75, 220: *see also* Strangers.
 Comiah, 80.
Covenant (The), 13.
Creation, 5, 123, 125, 165.
Criticism (Biblical), 108, chapters xii., xiii., xiv. *passim*, 197, 257, 306, &c.
 Cyrus, 94, 161, 239, 270, 271, 272.
- Damaseus, 11, 56, 71, 72, 77, 212, 226, 256, 304.
 Dan, 68.
 Daniel, 269, 271.
DANIEL (THE BOOK OF), 269-273, 274, 312, 318, 319.
 Darius, 95, 161.
 Darius the Mede, 270, 271, 272.
 Darius the Persian, 156, 161.
 David, 53-59, 81, 91, 137, 156, 181, 207, 266, 319.
 Davidson (Samuel), 320.
 Debir, 144.
 Deborah, 46.
Debt (Law of), 30, 253.
Decalogue (The): *see Ten Commandments*.
 Delitzsch (Dr. Franz), 233.
DEUTERONOMY (THE BOOK OF), 28, 110, 140, 144, 314, 316.
 Dibon, 151.
Divine Being (Names of), 117-119.
Documentary Hypothesis, 109, 111, 117, 120, 121.
- Earthquake (The)*, 280, 281, 305.
 Ebed-melech, 249, 254.
ECCLESIASTES (THE BOOK OF) 196-202, 271, 315, 318, 319.

- Ecclesiasticus (Book of), 318.
Eden, 5, 123, 125.
Edom, Edomites, 15, 26, 27, 56, 75, 76, 98, 127, 229, 235, 245, 256, 264, 281, 284, 308.
Eglon, king of Moab, 46.
Egypt, Egyptians, 18, 19, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 128, 130, 221, 224, 228, 232, 233, 247, 249, 253, 254, 255, 262, 264, 265, 306.
Ehud, 46.
Elah, 65.
Elam, Elamites, 228, 256
Elath, 76.
Elders appointed, 24.
Eleazer, the priest, 26.
Eli, 50.
Eliakim, 231.
Eliezer, the prophet, 310, 311.
Elihu, the son of Barachel, 172.
Elijah, 69, 207, 211, 310, 311, 313.
Eliphaz the Temanite, 171.
Elisha, 69, 72, 211, 310, 311.
Elkosh, 292, 293.
Elōhim, Elohist, &c., 117–119.
Endor (The Witch of), 54.
Enoch, 7.
Enos, 7.
Ephraim, Ephraimites, *see also* Kingdom of Israel, 221, 222, 224, 233, 306.
Ephron the Hittite, 12.
Esau, *see also* Edom, 14, 15, 17, 127, 308.
Esdras (Second Book of), 102.
Esther, 104, 163.
ESTHER (THE BOOK OF), 104–107, 162, 163, 315, 318, 319.
Ethiopia, Ethiopians, 227, 236, 249, 296.
Euphrates, 56, 79, 102, 257.
Eve, 5.
Evil-Merodach, 257.
Ewald (Professor Heinrich), 155, 156, 157, 161, 182, 222, 227, 258, 277, 293.
Exodus (The), 21, 129, 131, 249, 295.
EXODUS (THE BOOK OF), 19, 19–24, 110, 314.
Ezekiel, 261, 262, 263, 266, 267, 312.
EZEKIEL (THE BOOK OF), 261–268, 319.

Ezra, 95, 97, 316, 317, 319.

EZRA (THE BOOK OF), 94, 95, 98, 101, 154, 156, 158, 160, 315, 317, 318, 319.

Fall (The), 5, 123, 125, 165.

Festivals, 35-38.

First-Fruits, 43.

Five-fold Division of Old Testament Books, 4, 182, 192.

Flood (The), 7, 110, 111, 123, 126, 164, 165.

Forty Years' Wanderings of the Israelites, 25.

Gad the Seer, 309, 311.

Gad (Tribe of), 44.

Gaza, 225, 281.

Gedaliah, 254.

Genealogies, 8, 91, 127, 155, 159.

GENESIS (THE BOOK OF), 5-18, 109, 110, 111, 123, 124, 126, 127, 314.

Gerar, 11, 14.

Geshem the Arabian, 100.

Giants (The), 17, 45, 53, 123, 124.

Gibeon, 44, 45.

Gideon, 46, 137.

Gilboa (Battle of), 53, 55, 56.

Gilgal, 281.

Goliath, 53.

Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, 275, 277.

Greeks, Grecia, Grecian period, 155, 272, 318, 320.

НАВАККУК (THE Book or), 294-296, 312.

Hagar, 11, 12, 308.

Haggai, 95, 207, 298, 307, 312.

HAGGAI (THE Book of), 298-300.

Hagiographa (The), 315.

Ham, 8, 128, 130.

Haman, 104.

Hamath, 56, 71.

Hanani, Nehemiah's brother, 97.

Hanani, the prophet, 309, 311.

Hananiah, a false prophet, 252.

Haran, 9, 12, 15, 16.
Harvest Festival, 36.
Hazael, 76.
Hazor, 45, 144, 256.
Hebrews (The), 1, 137.
Hebron, 10, 12, 14, 55, 128.
Herodotus, 160, 297.
Heroes (The Hebrew), 47.
Hezekiah, 66, 77, 86, 182, 193, 208, 236, 237, 319.
High Places (The), 81, 84, 86, 87, 88, 137.
Hilkiah the high priest, 89, 141.
HISTORICAL Books (THE), 3, 4-107, 108-166.
Hobab, 24.
Hormah, 143, 144.
Hosea the prophet, 274, 275 (note), 312.
HOSEA (THE BOOK OF), 222, 274, 274-277.
Hoshea, king of Israel, 66, 71, 73, 275.
Huldah, the prophetess, 89, 208, 310, 312.
Hussab (?), 294.

Iddo the Seer, 309, 311.
Idols, idolatry, 239.
Images (Use of), 136.
Immanuel, 221, 222, 223.
Inheritance (Law of), 31.
Isaae, 12, 13, 127.
Isaiah, 78, 208, 215, 217, 312, 319.
ISAIAH (THE BOOK OF), 217-246, 319.
Ishbosheth, 55.
Ishmael, Ishmaelites, 11, 12, 127.
Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, 254.
Israel, Israelites, 1, 16-18, 218.
Israel (The kingdom of), 68-73, 221-223, 226, 250, 281.
Ittai the Gittite, 58.

Jabal, 7.
Jabbok, 17.
Jabesh-Gilead, 52, 54.
Jabin, 144.
Jacob, 14-18, 127, 128

- Jael, 46.
Jahaziel, 310, 311.
Jair the judge, 144.
Jair the son of Manasseh, 144.
Japheth, 8.
Jasher : *see* Book of.
Jeconiah, 80.
Jehoahaz, king of Israel, 66.
Jehoahaz, king of Judah, 67.
Jehoash (Joash), king of Israel, 66.
Jehoash (Joash), king of Judah, 66, 76, 85.
Jehoiachin, 67, 79.
Jehoiada, 67, 85.
Jehoiakim, 67, 77, 79, 247, 250–253, 310.
Jehoram (Joram), king of Israel, 65, 95.
Jehoram (Joram), king of Judah, 65, 76, 84.
Jehoshaphat, 65, 75, 76, 83, 92, 310.
Jehoshaphat (Valley of), 279.
ЈЕНОВАИ, *Jehovist*, 117–119.
Jehu the son of Nimshi, 66, 70, 71.
Jehu the son of Hanani, 309, 311.
Jephthah, 47.
Jeremiah, 146, 240, 247, 248, 249–254, 261, 312, 319.
ЈЕРЕМИАИ (THE BOOK OF), 247–260, 263, 319.
Jericho, 44.
Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, 63, 65, 68, 69.
Jeroboam, the son of Joash, 66, 71.
Jerusalem, *see also* Zion, 55, 58, 59, 63, 80, 93, 157, 219, 230, 232, 235,
 286, 303, 305, 306.
Jeshua: *see* Joshua.
Jethro, 21, 23.
Jews, 1, 104.
Joab, 56, 58, 59.
Joash: *see* Jehoash.
Job, 170, 173, 174.
ЈОВ (THE BOOK OF), 167–178, 215, 260, 271, 315.
Joel, 278, 311, 312.
ЈОЕЛ (THE BOOK OF), 278, 279.
Jonah, 212, 286, 287.
ЈОНАН (THE BOOK OF), 286, 287, 312.
Jonathan, 54, 55.
Joseph, 20.

- Josephus, 100, 101, 287, 318.
Joshua the son of Nun, 25, 44, 143, 145.
JOSHUA (THE BOOK OF), 44, 45, 50, 62, 110, 143, 144, 145, 314.
Joshua the son of Jozadak, 95, 298, 299, 301, 302.
Josiah, 66, 78, 87, 138, 208, 297, 298.
Jotham, 66, 85.
Jubal, 7.
Judah (The kingdom of), 74–80, 81–90, 233, 234, 249, 250, 281.
Judas Maccabæus, 100, 272, 318.
Judges, judicial procedure, &c., 43.
JUDGES (THE BOOK OF), 45–47, 62, 110, 143, 144, 315.
Judgments (The Divine), 231, 281.

- Kedar, 256.
Keil (Dr. C. F.), 155, 162, 287.
Kethubim, 314, 315.
Keturah, 13, 127.
Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, 68–73.
Kingdom of Judah: *see* Judah.
KINGS (THE BOOKS OF), 50, 58–90, 146, 148, 149, 315, 319.
Kings of Assyria mentioned in the Bible (Table of), 153.
Kings of Judah and Israel (Table of), 65.
Kings of Persia mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah (Table of), 160–162.
Korah, 26.
Koran (The), 30, 127.
Kuenen (Dr. A.), 182 (note).

- Laban, 16.
Lahai-roi (The well), 14.
Lamech, 7.
LAMENTATIONS (THE BOOK OF), 259, 260, 315, 319.
Land law (Hebrew), 31.
“Law (The),” 4, 314, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320.
Law: *see* Book.
Law (Date of Ceremonial and Civil), 136, 141.
Law (Public reading of, by Ezra), 97, 316, 317.
Laws of Moses (The), 23, 29–43, 133, 134, 136.
Leah, 16.
Lemuel (King), 193.
Levi, Levites, 42, 68, 88, 95, 308.

LEVITICUS (THE BOOK OF), 3, 19, 30–43, 112, 314.
Lex Talionis, 33.
Libnah, 76.
Littledale (Dr. R. F.), 205.
Livy, 253.
Lot, 9–12, 128.
Luther, 174.

Machpelah (Cave of), 12, 13, 18.
Mahanaim, 17, 58.
Maher-shalal-hash-baz, 222.
Mahomet, 30.
Malachi, 307, 312, 313.
MALACHI (THE BOOK OF), 307–309.
Mamre, 14, 18.
Manasseh, king of Judah, 66, 87, 93.
Manasseh (The Tribe of), 44.
Manetho, 131, 132 (note).
Manna, 23.
Manoah, 137.
Marah, 23.
Medicine, perhaps practised by the prophets, 211.
Medes (The), Media, 224, 228, 250.
Megiddo (Battle of), 78, 255, 298.
Melchizedek, 11, 319.
Menahem, 66, 72, 154.
Merodach-Baladan, 237.
Merom (Waters of), 45.
Mesha, king of Moab, 151, 152.
Mesopotamia, 29, 46.
MESSIAH (THE), 101, 213, 214, 220, 222, 223, 245, 251, 271, 289, 300.
Micah the Morasthite, 287, 288, 312.
MICAH (THE BOOK OF), 287–291.
Micaiah the son of Imlah, 310, 311.
Midian, Midianites, 21, 27.
Mileah, 128.
Milcom, 60.
Milman (H. H.), 111, 157, 212, 260.
Miracles, 130.
Miriam, 24, 26.
Mizraim, 128.

Moab, Moabites, 11, 27, 28, 46, 56, 60, 79, 98, 128, 150, 212, 226, 255, 264, 281, 296.
Moabite Stone, 150, 226.
Molech, Moloch, 60, 86, 87.
Mordecai, 104, 105.
Moresheth-Gath, Morasthite, 207.
Moses, 20, 21–28, 130, 139, 145, 174, 207, 319.
Music (Hebrew), 169, 211.
Mythology (The Classical), 123.

Nabi, 208.
Nadab, 65.
Nahor, Nahoreans, 12, 128.
Nahum, 213, 292, 312.
NAHUM (THE BOOK OF), 292–294.
Naomi, 48.
Nathan, 309, 311.
Nations (The rushing of the), 226.
Nebaim, 314.
Nebuchadnezzar, 79, 269, 270, 271.
Nehemiah, 95, 98, 158, 307, 316, 317, 319, 320.
NEHEMIAH (THE BOOK OF), 93, 94–98, 108 (note), 154, 156, 158, 160, 315, 317, 318, (and note), 319.
New Testament, see also *Christian, &c.*, 2, 307, 313.
Nicholls' Help to the Reading of the Bible, 177.
Nile (The), 227, 231.
Nineveh, 286, 287, 292, 293, 294, 296, 297.
No (Egyptian Thebes), 293, 294.
Noah, 7, 8, 128.
NUMBERS (THE BOOK OF), 3, 19, 23–28, 110, 143, 144, 314.

OBADIAH (THE BOOK OF), 283–285, 312.
Oded, 310, 312.
Offerings, 38.
Og, king of Bashan, 27.
Old age, 198.
Old Testament, 1, 3.
Omri, 65, 69, 70
Ophir, 75.

Orontes (The river), 56, 71.
Othniel, 46.

Palestine, 1, 225.
Palmer (A. S.), 201 (note).
Paradise, 6, 123, 125.
Paradise Lost, 6.
Paran (Wilderness of), 12.
Passover (The), 22, 24, 36, 89.
Pekah, 66, 73, 76, 310.
Pekahiah, 66.
PENTATEUCH (THE), 4, 4–13, 109, 110, 122, 129, 138, 143, 147, 159.
Pentecost, 36.
Persia, Persians, 94, 317.
Persian Kings (Table of), 161.
Pharaoh, 20, 21, 22.
Philistines, Philistia, 12, 14, 52, 54, 55, 56, 76, 77, 225, 228, 255, 261, 281, 284, 296, 304.
Phineas, 27, 62.
Pithom, 20.
Poetry (Hebrew), 55, 167, 198–202, 202, 210.
Predictions: see *Prophecy*.
Prophecy (Literal fulfilment of), 265.
Prophecy (Predictive element in), 215, 285.
Prophet, prophesy, &c. (Meaning of the words), 208, 209 (note).
PROPHETICAL BOOKS (THE), 3, 50, 206–313, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319.
Prophetic Book (Arrangement of a), 246, 258, 262.
Prophets (The Hebrew), 206–208, 210, 309, 311, 315.
PROPHETS (THE MINOR), 274, 274–313, 319.
Prophets (Succession of), 309, 311.
Prophets (The Days without), 313.
Prophets of the Last Days (The), 212.
Prophets of heathen deities, 310, 313.
PROVERBS (THE BOOK OF), 192–196, 315, 318, 319.
Providence (Our power of comprehending), 131 (and note).
PSALMS (THE BOOK OF), 56, 130, 137, 168, 169, 179–191, 193, 214, 315, 317, 318, 319.
Psalmody (Other examples of), 55, 57, 237, 295.
Pul, king of Assyria, 72, 153, 154.
Puns, play on words, 221, 222, 276, 288.
Purim (The Feast of), 106, 107, 163.

- Quarles (Francis), 201.
- Raamses, 20, 132, 133.
- Rachel, 16.
- Rahab, 137.
- Rainbow (The)*, 8, 112, 123.
- Ramah, 137.
- Rebekah, 12, 14.
- Rechab, Rechabites, 253.
- Recorder (The office of)*, 148.
- Reformations in Judah*, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89.
- Rehoboam, 63, 74, 83, 309.
- Religion (An Evidence of)*, 180.
- Religion (Reality of)*, 176, 184, 186, 190.
- Religious parties in Judah*, 81.
- Responsibility (Personal)*, 267.
- Resurrection of the dead (Doctrine of)*, 273 : *see also* 185.
- Return from Babylon (The)*, 94, 189.
- Reumah, 128.
- Revelation (The Bible a record of progressive)*, 142.
- Rezin, 76.
- Roëh*, 209.
- RUTH (THE BOOK OF)**, 48, 49, 137, 315, 319.
-
- Sabbath (The), Sabbatical Year, &c.*, 5, 32, 35, 40, 43, 97, 134, 135, 139 (and note), 179.
- Sacrifices*, 38.
- Salem, 11.
- Samaria, Samaritans, 69, 73, 88, 98, 256, 281, 282.
- Samuel, 51, 52, 137, 138, 159, 207, 210, 311, 319.
- SAMUEL (THE BOOKS OF)**, 50, 54, 50–58, 146, 148, 315.
- Sanballat, 100.
- Sarah, Sarai, 11.
- Sargon, 153, 229, 230, 236.
- Saul, 52, 53, 54.
- Seythians in Asia (The), 250, 297.
- Seir*, 209.
- Seir (Mount), 15, 229.
- Sennacherib, 77, 153, 229, 236, 239, 293
- Septuagint (The)*, 4, 19, 20 (and note), 146, 154, 258, 307, 314, 320.

- Seraiah, 243.
Servant of Jehovah (The), 213, 215, 239, 240, 260.
 Seth, 7, 128.
Seth (Descendants of), 7, 128, 129.
 Shalem, 17.
 Shallum, king of Israel, 66, 71 (note).
 Shallum, king of Judah, 67.
 Shamgar, 46.
Shear-jashub, 222.
 Shebna, 230.
 Shechem: *see* Sichem.
 Shem, 8.
 Shemaiah, 252, 309, 311.
 Sherlock (Rev. W.), 188, 189, and Preface.
 Shiloh, 51, 309.
 Shishak, 74.
 Sichem, or Shechem, 10, 17, 70.
 Sidon, 128, 231, 264, 304.
 Sihor (= the Nile), 231 (note).
 Sihon, 27.
Silent Land (The), 229.
 Sinai, 22, 23.
 Smith (George), 153.
 Solomon, 59-62, 91, 137, 149, 156, 192, 193, 198, 202, 205, 309.
SOLOMON (THE SONG OF), 202-205, 315, 318, 319.
Spies (The), 25.
 Stanley (A. P.), 264.
Strangers: *see also* Commerce, 34, 43, 59, 220, 243.
 Succoth, 17.
 Syria, Syrians: *see also* Damascus, 56, 72, 75, 76, 77, 79, 86, 221.
- Tabeal (The son of), 221, 222.
Tabernacle (The), 29, 41.
Tabernacles (Feast of), 37, 68, 97, 138.
 Tarshish: *see* Tharshish.
Taxes, 42.
Temple (The), 42, 59, 78, 80, 85, 88, 89, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 138, 140, 149, 157, 179, 189, 220, 238, 245, 250, 266, 298, 299, 301, 302, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311.
Ten Commandments (The), 23, 29, 133, 135.
 Tennyson (Alfred), 201, 259.

Tenses (The Hebrew), 218, 285.
Tekoa, 280.
Terah, 9.
Tharshish, 75, 231, 287.
Tiglath-pileser, 73, 153, 154.
Tirzah, 70 (and note).
Titles of Books, 147, 181 (and note), 217 (note).
Tobiah the Ammonite, 100.
Toleration (Religious), 61.
Torah, 314.
Tradition (Jewish, about the Sacred Books), 108, 146, 249, 310.
Trespass (Law of), 33.
Trespass Offering, 39.
Tribes (The lost), 101–104, 106.
Trumpets (Feast of), 37.
Tubal-cain, 7.
Tyre, 212, 231, 264, 265, 281, 304.
Tzemach, 301, 302.

Unleavened Bread (Feast of), 36.
Ur of the Chaldees, 9.
Urijah the son of Shemaiah, 252, 310, 312.
Usury, 43, 96.
Uzziah: *see* Azariah.

Vows, 43, 47.
Vulgate (The), 146 (and note), 314.

War, warfare, &c., 43.
Water from the rock, 23, 26.
Waterland (Dr.), 277.
Westcott (B. F.), 320.
Wisdom (Searching for), 197.
Witchcraft, 32, 54, 206, 207.
Women, 5, 6, 34, 220, 234, 275, 277, 281, 302, 308.
Wordsworth (Dr. C.), 205, 277, 285.

Young (The Bible and the), 163, and Preface.
Youth and old age, 198.

- Zachariah (*properly* Zechariah), king of Israel, 66.
Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, 85.
Zechariah, a prophet in the reign of Uzziah, 92, 310, 312.
Zechariah, the son of Iddo, 95, 298, 300, 307, 312.
ZECHARIAH (THE BOOK OF), 274, 300-307, 312.
Zedekiah, king of Judah, 67, 80, 90, 251, 252, 253, 254, 257.
Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, 310.
Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, 252.
ZEPHANIAH (THE BOOK OF), 296-298, 312.
Zerubbabel, 95, 298, 299, 300, 301, 303.
Ziklag, 54.
Zimri, 65.
Zion: *see also* Jerusalem, 232, 235, 262.
Zipporah, 21.

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